To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kippy Lee Myers entitled "Philosophical Problems Concerning the Bible and Animal Telos." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Philosophy.

Rem B. Edwards

Rem B. Edwards, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
And recommend its acceptance:

John Nolt

James Nelson

David Dungan

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

# Philosophical Issues Concerning the Bible and Animal *Telos*

A Dissertation
Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kippy Myers
May 2000

Copyright © Kippy Lee Myers, 2000

All rights reserved

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and daughters

Debi, Randa, and Megan Myers

for their patience, sacrifice, and encouragement

and

my parents

Mary Stone Myers and Denzil Myers

for their constant encouragement.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to whom I am grateful for making my time at the University of Tennessee so rewarding. I have benefited greatly from knowing the faculty and graduate students in the Department of Philosophy over the years that I have worked on this project. I am particularly grateful to my Dissertation Committee: Rem Edwards, John Nolt, James Nelson, and David Dungan. These professors have patiently and resolutely guided me through a long and difficult process.

Anne Beardsley and Marie Horton have been extremely good to me. Although they work with a number of philosophy students in the Philosophy Department office, they are always cheerful, encouraging, and helpful above and beyond the call of duty. They have offered smiles and encouragement on dark and difficult days.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Rolland Pack, Dr. Ralph Gilmore, and Dr. David Lipe, my friends and mentors who have assisted and inspired me in many ways.

I would also like to recognize Roy Deaver, one of the first teachers who pushed me to try harder and learn more than I had previously thought I could. Without him, I do not think that I could have even dreamed of achieving this goal.

I owe my greatest debt to my sweet wife, Debi. She has made untold sacrifices in order to help me reach this goal. She has managed the home, children, finances, crises, and faced dozens of other challenges alone while I was out of town for days at a time taking classes, researching, taking exams, and writing. Without her love, willingness, support, motivation, and contributions, I could never have considered doing this.

# ABSTRACT

This dissertation lays the groundwork (1) for understanding why there is so much disagreement evident in the current discussion of what the Bible says about animal *telos*, and (2) perhaps for helping an individual work through a number of philosophical barriers in order to come to an understanding of what the Bible says about animal *telos* from his or her own worldview.

First, the dissertation shows how some writers seemingly claim that the Judeo-Christian views apparent in the Bible have influenced the western world in such a way that they have significantly contributed to the wrong thinking about animal *telos* and the inhumane treatment of animals which it implies. However, other writers claim that the Judeo-Christian views apparent in the Bible are precisely what have raised awareness of animal concerns and have contributed to the better treatment of animals. The question begs to be answered, "Why is there such a radical difference in opinion on what a single book says about animal *telos*?"

Second, the dissertation uncovers some of the underlying philosophical issues which tend comprise the worldviews that separate those who write about the Bible and animal *telos*. These differences in philosophical presuppositions are often subtle and thus do not clearly appear on the surface, but nevertheless generate a great deal of disagreement concerning the Bible and animal *telos*. Because of the variety of underlying presuppositions that different people have (particularly about the Bible), when they say, "Here is what the Bible says about X" it is almost as if they are talking about different books, rather than only one.

Third, the dissertation reviews the reasoning of some important writers (Andrew Linzey, James Gustafson, Jay McDaniel, John Berkman, and Stanley Hauerwas) who have recently argued that the Bible view of animal *telos* favors better treatment of animals than some have traditionally contended.

Fourth, in Appendix A the dissertation provides an in-depth catalog of biblical texts relevant to the issue of animal *telos* along with brief discussions of their significance for this topic.

Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Problem

The past two centuries have seen a far reaching gestalt shift in the western world's sensitization to issues connected to animal welfare. Ramifications of this shift turn up in related areas of human endeavor. When similar shifts in other fields have occurred in the past, blame for the previous years of wrong thinking has been laid at the doorstep of several different (but related) disciplines. The same thing has occurred with the shift in thinking about animals. Several institutions are blamed for many of the problems associated with the proper treatment of animals. Scientists have felt the impact of this shift through criticisms of their use of animals as subjects of research and experimentation. Entertainers have felt the impact through criticisms of the way they treat the animals they use. Medicine has felt the impact through criticisms of its development of surgical techniques, instruction, and research. It is only natural that these criticisms would surface. Any time changes in long-held mindsets become popular, the changes affect the world in very real and measurable ways.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that in the past two centuries there has been increasing discussion about the role which religion has played and/or should play in the perception and treatment of animals.[1] In particular, much of the most heated aspect of the debate has centered on what some thinkers perceive as the damage which the Judeo-Christian tradition has inflicted upon the animal kingdom. The Judeo-Christian perception of the proper treatment of animals is based upon the prior notion

[1]The discussion seems to have been growing exponentially since the 1960's.

of the *telos* of animals. What people believe about animals *telos* will inevitably influence the way they behave toward animals.

Thus, while some writers think that the Judeo-Christian worldview has been the major obstacle to the humane movement, others think that the Judeo-Christian outlook fostered and informed the humane movement, including the anti-vivisection movement of the previous century. For example, Andrew Linzey is generally acknowledged as the current leader among theologians devoted to awakening people to recognize their God-given, Bible-based ethical responsibilities toward animals. He believes that a careful study of the Bible will lead one to an understanding of animal *telos* which should lead to a humane treatment of animals.

It has been the philosophers, however, who appear to have taken up the animal welfare cause and have brought the discussion to the fore. Theologians seem to have been much slower to side with Linzey and his compatriots and take up the standard which they have been bearing for more than twenty years. Linzey says this in the information booklet promoting the Mansfield College International Fund for Animal Welfare:

> philosophical discussion about animals, however, has not been matched by a corresponding interest among theologians and religious communities. Despite increasing concern for ecological issues, theological ethics continue to be characterised by a narrowly defined humanocentrism . . . .[2]

As the booklet also points out, "Among the voluminous works of contemporary theology, there is hardly a handful which explore the moral significance of our treatment of animals."[3] Linzey has been working in this field for so long that he can speak authoritatively about the number of theological works in this area.

---

[2]Ethical Concern for Animals: Introducing the IFAW Fellowship at Oxford (Oxford: IFAW, 1994):2.

[3]Ibid. 2.

Stephen Clark also recognized the need to talk about the "Christian attitude to the non-human" but only found it necessary to declare: "There isn't one."[4] Charles Pinches, Jay McDaniel, and others agree: "The silence of contemporary Christian thinkers is surprising . . . Why have contemporary Christians been silent?"[5] Judging from the steadily increasing number of writings which have been surfacing over the past thirty years, however, this situation is changing considerably. Many writers think that this increased interest is in large part due to a lecture delivered by Lynn White in 1966.[6]

## LYNN WHITE'S LECTURE

In his 1966 lecture for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, White claimed that the western mind contains a ruthless anthropocentrism which views all non-human life on earth as subservient to human wishes. White believed that the origins of this anthropocentric mindset are religious, and largely can be traced to Jewish and Christian exploitative attitudes toward nature. Although a professing member of the Christianity he indicted, White bemoaned the fact that "the roots of our [ecological] trouble are so largely religious."[7] Of all of the world's religions, he concluded that it was particularly Judaism and Christianity that "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends."[8] This happened partly because, "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of

---

[4]Stephen R. L. Clark, The Moral Status of Animals (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977):156-195.

[5]Charles Pinches and Jay B. McDaniel, eds. Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):viii.

[6]Of the many recent additions to the discussion, an anthology of different points of view on the religious contribution to environmental ethical studies (or lack of it) is This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, and Environment Roger S. Gottlieb, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[7]Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Science March 10, 1967:1207.

[8]Ibid. 1205.

indifference to the feelings of natural objects."[9] White thought that animism contained an inherent respect for the environment because as a religion it holds that there are spirits and/or gods in nature, even in inanimate objects. But Christianity forced out a lot of animism, and as a result, "To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact."[10] For reasons like these, White thought that the exploitation of nature logically followed the spread of Christianity.

Not only did White claim that too many Jews and Christians had thought that God made nature for the sole purpose of serving human beings, and that Judaism and Christianity forced a dichotomy of human beings and nature, but he also said that that Judaism allowed people to be comfortable in the egoistic position of using nature for whatever they wanted without regarding the well-being of nature in its own right. Thus, White believed that these two religions had not accounted nature as having intrinsic worth. To them, nature had only instrumental value, i.e., value insofar as it served humanity.

In White's mind, the result of this improper evaluation is that our "science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature."[11] That is, nature is here to be investigated and manipulated, all to humanity's profit, with no time lost in being caretakers of the environment. If ultimately it turns out that nature is not able to withstand mankind's occupation, so be it.

Although White's speech addressed the broader category of general ecology, it has had a clear and powerful impact on the animal rights discussion. What he says concerning the Judeo-Christian teachings about the *telos* of nature in general would necessarily be true for the animal kingdom in particular since animals are part of the

---

[9]Ibid.
[10]Ibid. 1206.
[11]Ibid.

natural world. Dogs, goldfish, and elephants are part of nature; and thus, according to White, would not Christians also regard them as no more than physical facts? If this is the case, what ramifications does his speech have on the relation between religion and the humane treatment of animals?

Of course, White did not aver that Christianity is completely without potential for becoming environmentally friendly. He closed the lecture (though perhaps tongue in cheek) by proposing Saint Francis of Assisi "as a patron saint for ecologists"[12] because of the mystic's spiritual relationship to nature and especially his views about animals. But he believed that the Saint Francises were too few and far between.

A number of writers involved in the "animal rights movement" saw the implications of the speech and followed White's lead, pointing fingers at Judaism and/or Christianity as sources of significant environmental and animal problems. However, not only did many of the subsequent writers accept White's conclusions, some took the charges even further. Since White's speech influenced so many writers to extend his argument about nature to the discussion of animals, his argument deserves consideration here along with the writings that it encouraged.

## THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN MODEL AND ANIMAL OPPRESSION

Judging from the responses in books, articles, and magazine letter columns, large numbers of readers were shocked by the position that White advocated, going so far as to tie two extremely influential and admired religions to millennia of ecological abuse. Writers in the discussion about animals applied the same reasoning to the history of animal abuse.

In a comparable way, a few years ago Peter Singer made what seemed to be a new and startling claim that only a religious fanatic would say that man is

---

[12]Ibid. 1207

> the special darling of the universe or that other animals were created to provide us with food, or that we have divine authority over them, and divine permission to kill them.[13]

But as new and innovative as his statement appeared to be, it only parallels similar statements made by ancestors of long ago. Perhaps many writers had not known about these claims claims made long before White's speech.

Several writers have held positions similar to White's even though they notably predate him. Take for example Celsus, the first century A. D. skeptic who denied that "God created the universe for man rather than for other animals -- only absurd pride . . . can engender such a thought."[14] This conviction is very similar to some of White's beliefs and is virtually mirrored by Singer's statement, although it was made almost two thousand years earlier.

The centuries which followed the age of Celsus saw occasional references to the ill effects of these religions on animals and the environment, but the nineteenth century emphasis on the humane treatment of animals and the anti-vivisection movement produced a myriad of such proponents. Arthur Schopenhauer expressed his view that, "The morality of Christianity has no consideration for animals, a defect that is better admitted than perpetuated . . . ."[15] Henry Salt, another nineteenth century author, also saw a negative influence of religion on animals as can be seen in his statement,

> As far as any excuses can be alleged, in explanation of the insensibility or inhumanity of the western nations in their treatment of animals, these excuses may be mostly traced back to one or the other of two theoretical contentions, wholly different in origin, yet alike in this -- that both postulate an absolute

---

[13]Tim Stafford, "Animal Liberation," Christianity Today June 18, 1990:19.

[14]Francis H. Rowley, The Humane Idea (Boston: American Humane Education Society, 1912):24.

[15]Tom Regan and Peter Singer, Animal Rights and Human Obligations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976):128.

> difference of nature between men and the lower kinds. The first is the so-called "religious" notion . . . .[16]

Even though these beliefs are not new, they seem to have multiplied in the years since White's speech. Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain agreed with him, saying, "Neither Judaism nor Christianity has served animal interest well . . . ."[17] Singer endorses this idea that the Western problems with ecology and behavior toward animals originate "in two traditions: Judaism and Greek antiquity. These roots unite in Christianity, and it is through Christianity that they came to prevail in Europe."[18]

Rosemary Rodd emphasizes the negative impact which Judaism and Christianity engenders by way of the ontological separation which they establish between human and animal. This theological distinction between humans and animals is one of the mainstays of the controversy. Rodd says,[19]

> Judaeo-Christian culture tends to emphasize how different humans are from animals while Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist traditions emphasize how similar they are.[20]

Susan Sperling is also thinks that this is a key issue in the controversy and reasons from the premise, "Christian cosmology sharply defined the border between

---

[16]Henry S. Salt, Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress (New York: Macmillan, 1894):8.

[17]Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain, Animal Welfare and Human Values (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993):15.

[18]Peter Singer, Animal Liberation (New York: New York Review, 1990):186.

[19]It is not uncommon to hear someone who holds Rodd's position also appeal to different world religions as better examples of attitudes toward animals. Certain cultures and religions have an "official policy" that human beings and animals enjoy a closer ontological relationship than some in the West observe. But this does not in itself determine that the adherents of those cultures and religions treat animals any better than the Judeo-Christian influenced Westerners do. For example, see Roberta Kalechofsky, "The Animal Rights Movement and Religion," in Autobiography of a Revolutionary: Essays on Animal and Human Rights Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1991):78-95 and the response of two avowed Jews - Alan Freeman and Betty Mensch, "Scratching the Belly of the Beast" in Animal Experimentation: The Moral Issues Robert M. Baird and Stuart E. Rosenbaum, eds. (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991):161-178.

[20]Rosemary Rodd, Biology, Ethics & Animals (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990):24.

animal and human . . . ."[21] One of the ways in which Christians have established this deep dichotomy is by saying that humans are made in God's image but animals are not. Human beings have souls, but animals do not. Finn Lynge expressed it in these terms, "After all, it has never been a matter of doctrine that Jesus died on the cross so that animals could go to heaven."[22] This evidently relegates animalkind to a different class, a lower rung of the ontological ladder. Hence, some Christians may have felt justified in mistreating animals because the biblical text does not attribute sentience or eternal souls to animals.[23]

Part of the driving force behind this idea is the notion that God himself has ordained things to be this way. Divine ordination of behavior offers the security of thinking that one is justified in doing what dissenters think is a great disservice to the environment and its inhabitants. Paul W. Taylor designates this phenomenon as "the Judeo-Christian concept of the Great Chain of Being" and says, "Humans are superior to animals and plants because their Creator has given them a higher place on the chain."[24] He concludes that the "metaphysical and epistemological difficulties with this conception of a hierarchy of entities are, in my mind, insuperable."[25]

Feminist Carol J. Adams adds her voice to the position that "the Bible . . . functions to sacralize animals' oppression." She even refers to the problem as the "Christian humanocentric theology."[26] Further,

---

[21]Susan Sperling, Animal Liberators: Research and Morality (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988):15.

[22]Finn Lynge, Arctic Wars, Animals Rights, Endangered Peoples transl. by Marianne Stenbaek (Janover: University Press of England, 1992):70.

[23]Linzey 10-14.

[24]Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," in The Animal Rights/Environmental Ethics Debate, ed. Eugene C. Hargrove (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992):116.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Carol J. Adams, Neither Man Nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals (New York: Continuum, 1994):15.

> the early chapters of Genesis, mediated by a specifically Christian interpretation, offer a legitimization for the eating of animals that seems to let individuals off the hook. It functions as a myth of origins, explaining our nature as corpse eaters.[27]

Arnold Toynbee interprets these chapters to say that God created the world and chose to turn it over to the humans and "to license Adam and Eve to do what *they* liked with it . . . ." Toynbee thinks that "the injunction to 'subdue,' which modern man has taken as his directive is surely immoral, impracticable, and disastrous."[28] Gabriel Fackre agrees that these verses "encouraged the rape of Mother Earth."[29]

But Miriam Rothschild interjects that if God told humans to treat nature however they wish, then God must not be very compassionate toward nature himself. This led her to wryly suggest, "The western world seems to have accepted God's lack of compassion for the animal kingdom, and for the next 2000 years has lived up to this version of the Image most successfully."[30]

Singer makes explicit what others assumed or implied when he said that this divine absolution of inhumane treatment of animals and environment did not come from a declaration from God but from the thoroughly human Hebrew mindset. Biblical statements regarding a deep division between human beings and animals, therefore, are simply human ideas which serve to exalt human beings.

> The biblical story of the creation sets out very clearly the nature of the relationship between man and animal as the Hebrew people conceived it to be. It is a superb example of myth echoing reality . . . The Bible tells us that God made man in His own image. We may regard this as man making God in his own image.[31]

---

[27]Ibid. 171.

[28]Arnold Toynbee, "The Religious Background of the Present Environmental Crisis" International Journal of Environmental Studies 3 (1972):141-146.

[29]Gabriel Fackre, "Ecology and Theology" in Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology Ian G. Barbour, ed. (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973):118.

[30]Miriam Rothschild, Animals and Man: The Romanes Lecture (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986):11.

[31]Singer 186-187.

Some of these writers are not simply blaming the behavior of Jews and Christians for the West's views. Rather, they are taking their charges directly to the Bible itself (see aforementioned quotes from Singer, Adams, et al.).

In spite of the way in which several of these writers have used White's comments as a springboard to launch their attacks on the Bible, John Leax and James Wolfe say that White's criticisms are different in that they are not actually aimed at the Bible. Leax and Wolfe believe that White offered only a "historical analysis" in his critique.

> He is interested in the theology the church has lived . . . Christianity, as a social institution, can be seen then as bearing a burden of guilt, not for what it required, but for what it permitted. It is guilty, if not of a sin of commission, of at least, a sin of omission.[32]

Thus, they think that White was criticizing what people had done and allowed, not what the Bible justifies. This distinction is often overlooked. What a document says and what people do with it may be two completely different things.

A proper response to White and to those who hold comparable positions on this subject would involve two areas of concern. First, clarify the distinction between the concepts contained in a book on the one hand, and the behavior of individuals on the other. That is, what the Bible itself says in the texts in question (the quotes from Genesis chapters one and two, for example) is one topic, and the way professing Jews and Christians have behaved is another. Much of the remainder of this chapter will consider this question.

Second, a response to White would involve a search of the biblical texts to see which views of animal and the environment are justifiable according to the texts and

---

[32]John Leax and James Wolfe, "Intervention, Stewardship and Theocentrism: A Response to Grizzle and Cogdill's 'Subduing the Earth While Tending the Garden'" Faculty Dialogue (Fall 1994):166.

thus whether White and others are correct in saying "the Bible says thus and so." This involves a thorough study of the biblical texts which are relevant to this topic, and a comparison of White's charges with the attitudes expressed in these texts. This is the purpose of Appendix A, the assembling of all the biblical texts which express attitudes about animal *telos*. However, before getting to the biblical materials, it seems in order to make a preliminary response by briefly elucidating some problematic aspects of White's speech.

## DEFINING CHRISTIANITY

White clearly holds Judeo-Christianity accountable for harming the environment. But what exactly is Judeo-Christianity? White does not unambiguously answer this question. For example, people commonly use the term Christianity to refer to (1) the written beliefs of certain Christian institutions and/or churches, or (2) the observed behavior of those who profess adherence to a Christian institution and/or church. The first use might refer to the Bible itself, Papal decrees, creeds, or other documents, or it could simply refer to the history of Catholicism's documents. The second use seems to generalize particular behavior patterns so as to characterize the average Christian. So, when White refers to Judaism or Christianity, does he intend the reader to understand that he is referencing documents which these religions have produced, or does he intend the reader to imagine the average Jew or Christian? This is a "document vs. behavior" problem.

Ernest Feenstra noticed this problem in White's speech. He tries to clarify it by pointing out that not everyone in a group is entirely faithful to the teachings of that group. Even logicians commit the fallacies they condemn, but their behavior is in contrast to the logic book they claim to believe and try to follow. First, are they being faithful to their texts? Second, are the texts responsible for the logicians' misbehaving? Feenstra commented in *Science* magazine,

> [White] seems to feel that what Christians have said and done adequately represents Christianity. To speak of 'orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature' is to miss the heresy and blasphemy and label it normative. Not everything Christians do is Christian in character.[33]

Michael Leahy also takes a step in this direction when he notes that,

> Singer prefers to give precedence to the theories of his eminent sources whilst deploring their lapses into indulgence whereas, to turn the well-stocked tables, it might be more reliable to accept what they actually practised as indicating less than complete confidence in what they preached.[34]

This is a significant point because a person must clearly identify what they are addressing, especially when the address involves blaming of some type. Whom or what has White blamed? According to some writers, the answer to this question is unclear.

There are times when White clearly means to be talking about the behavior of Christians. But even then he walks the thin line that separates historically verifiable patterns of behavior from overgeneralizations when he talks about how Christianity has believed or practiced something. He apparently intends to claim that over a period of several millennia, the "average" Jew or Christian has held the homocentrist view to the extent that they have (either personally or through those whom they have influenced) severely damaged the environment. But White does not clearly state his position in these terms. His words could often be construed as the stronger position that "most" Jews and Christians have behaved a certain way. Of course, either position would be difficult to prove because of their inductive nature, and White does not call forth statistics to make the case for either.

---

[33]Ernest S. Feenstra, Letter to the Editor Science (May 12, 1967):737.

[34]Michael P. T. Leahy, Against Liberation: Putting Animals in Perspective (London: Routledge, 1991):76.

## WHO BEST REPRESENTS THE CHRISTIAN VIEW?

One tack which some writers take to prove that White was correct about what Christianity has traditionally believed and practiced, is to quote "representative" Christians. Augustine and Aquinas are two commonly employed examples of homocentrism and are treated as official documenters of Christian teaching on this subject.[35] Paul Santmire (author of a book on the theological development of Augustine) thinks, however, that some writers have misrepresented Augustine. Santmire believes that the way some represent Augustine "is largely a caricature, an introspective, sex-obsessed cleric, who hates the created world . . . ."[36] Santmire then adds that Augustine's matured spirituality "represents a flowering of the ecological promise of Christian theology, which later was to be practically expressed in the life of St. Francis."[37]

In order to get a broader understanding of Augustine's views about animal *telos*, one should read his statements about how humans can learn scriptural metaphors from animals,[38] about how they know some things better than humans do,[39] about how animals love themselves and their bodies just as humans do,[40] about how animals have signs that express their thoughts,[41] about their memories,[42] et al. Augustine was more affectionate toward animals than some have allowed.

---

[35]As in the case of Singer, Animal Liberation 193.

[36]H. Paul Santmire, "Is Christianity Ecologically Bankrupt? The View From Asylum Hill" in An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness Michael Barnes, ed. New York: College Theology Society):22.

[37]Ibid. See also Fackre, 119, and Thomas Sieger Derr, Creation At Risk? Religion, Science, and Environmentalism Michael Cromartie, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995):87. William C. French likewise tries to show another side of Aquinas' views on animals and the environment in "Beast-Machines and the Technocratic Reduction of Life" in Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):38.

[38]On Christian Doctrine 12.16.24.

[39]Confessions 3.5.10.

[40]On Christian Doctrine 1.26.27.

[41]Ibid. 2.3.

[42]Confessions 10.17.26.

Whether one considers Augustine and Aquinas friends or foes of animals, their views should not be considered standard Christian doctrine. They are indeed good examples of certain views, but it is questionable whether their views on anything accurately depict the views shared by large segments of Christendom encompassing so many continents over so lengthy a span of time.

In order to accomplish this task successfully, one would have to establish what the Christian or Jewish view (either the average view or the teaching of documents) is before trying to show that anyone is a good example of it. Otherwise, the commentator is merely saying, "Here are some people who hold view X." In such a case, the Christian model is assumed to be view X and the writers are used as examples to prove it, begging the question.

It is a different project to claim, "The average Christian holds an exploitative attitude toward nature" and then explain what those words mean and follow it up with documentation through scientific surveys, polls, and/or similar statistical studies. It is possible to show a particular trend throughout Jewish or Christian history by selecting certain writings, and identifying statements which do not fit that trend as atypical. But maybe the contradictory statements could be multiplied if someone searched and thus balance the "average Christian" viewpoint into a more realistic spectrum of beliefs rather than seeing it as more of a monolithic belief.

For example, John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) was a well known author, preacher, and advocate of views held by many people around the time of Augustine. He taught that Christians should "extend their gentleness unto animals because they are of the same origin as ourselves . . . ."[43] In his First Dialogue, Sulpicius Severus

---

[43]Andrew N. Rowan, Of Mice, Models, and Men: A Critical Evaluation of Animal Research (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984):252.

(who also lived around the same time as Augustine)[44] tells of a wolf who was very intelligent, did acts of courtesy, and perceived forgiveness. He tells of a man who healed the blind eyes of some lion pups after the lion non-verbally asked for his help. He tells of an Ibex who taught a man non-verbally how to distinguish between poisonous and non-poisonous herbs. In his Second Dialogue he tells of hunters chasing a rabbit until Martin (a "saint") chased the dogs away. He even tells of a sheared lamb who had given his "tunic," i.e., his covering, to someone in need and thus fulfilled a gospel precept of giving one's cloak to another.

Consider Arnobius' arguments against the "heathen" religions in which he reasons,

> . . . what pleasure is it to take delight in the slaughter of harmless creatures, to have the ears ringing often with their piteous bellowings, to see rivers of blood, the life fleeing away with the blood, and the secret parts having been laid open, not only the intestines to protrude with the excrements, but also the heart still bounding with the life left in it, and the trembling, palpitating veins in the viscera? We half-savage men, nay rather, -- to say with more candour what it is truer and more candid to say, -- we savages, whom unhappy necessity and bad habit have trained to take these as food, are sometimes moved with pity for them; we ourselves accuse and condemn ourselves when the thing is seen and looked into thoroughly, because, neglecting the law which is binding on men, we have broken through the bonds which naturally united us at the beginning.[45]

Arnobius argued that not only is it wrong for a human being to enjoy such sacrifices (or even perhaps to eat meat), but it is not godlike. The descriptions of the process sound much like the centuries later anti-vivisectionist campaign and the yet later animal rights literature. All efforts elicit the same negative response. Another very modern sounding part of Arnobius' argument is where an animal speaks out for itself.

---

[44]For dating purposes it is helpful to note that Sulpicius was baptized about 390 A. D.

[45]Arnobius, "The Seven Books of Arnobius Against the Heathen," Book 7.4, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed.s Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publ. Co., 1951):519.

> . . . if some ox . . . were to take a man's voice and speak these words: "Is this, then, O Jupiter, or whatever god thou art, humane or right, or should it be considered at all just, that when another has sinned I should be killed, and that you should allow satisfaction to be made to you with my blood, although I never did you wrong, never wittingly or unwittingly did violence to your divinity and majesty, being, as thou knowest, a dumb creature, not departing from the simplicity of my nature, nor inclined to be fickle in my manners . . ."[46]

The ox continues his argument like this for a number of lines before concluding, "Does it not seem to you, O Jupiter, unjust and barbarous that I should be killed, that I should be slain, that you may be soothed, and the guilty find impunity?"[47]

Arnobius sounds very "pro-animal" in such passages. He is not only attempting to combat the pagan ideas which he opposes, but in doing so is taking the side of animals. In doing so, he uses emotion, logic, and an attention-getting talking ox. Yet, he is arguing from a Christian stance. Far from saying that animals may serve any use a human being wants to put it to, he involves pity in his argument.

Additional cases like these in the annals of Judeo-Christian writings raise questions about whether White and others have accurately described the average Jew or Christian. If only someone would take the time to search each page of professing Christian writings throughout the ages rather than using the same examples of those who are so often quoted to represent the extreme homocentrist standpoint! A careful study of works produced by Jews and Christians over the centuries would uncover a tremendous number of believers such as Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Robert Boyle, Cardinal Manning, C. S. Lewis, Albert Schweitzer, John Henry Newman, John R. W. Stott, John Cobb, Andrew Linzey, John Berkman, and Jay

---

[46]Ibid. 520.
[47]Ibid. 521.

McDaniel, to name a few, who advocated the humane treatment of animals.[48] For instance, James Granger preached a sermon against animal cruelty at Oxford in 1772 entitled, "An Apology for the Brute Creation or Abuse of Animals Censured."[49] That does not mean that he was a vegetarian. But neither did he favor treating animals like dirt as though they had no respectability apart from the whims of human beings.[50]

There have always been people in both Judaism and Christendom who favored and encouraged the humane treatment of animals because they believed God had said so, and thus did not fit the model which White and others have criticized.[51] Sydney Coleman records the efforts of a few such voices, including Reverend Humphrey Primatt who wrote the book *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* in 1776.[52] Another case occurred on June 16, 1824, when Reverend Arthur Broome presided at a meeting which would lead to the establishment of the

---

[48]A very interesting history of views on the environment, including those of third world religions is J. J. Clarke's Voices of the Earth: An Anthology of Ideas and Arguments (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1994). This book helps put the Judeo-Christian model in historical and global perspective along with the Classical, Renaissance, Romantic, et. al., views of nature. A helpful anthology which focuses only on Christianity and animals is edited by Andrew Linzey and Tom Regan, Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings (New York: Crossroad, 1988). Linzey and Dorothy Yamamoto edited a more recent work, Animals On The Agenda: Questions About Animals for Theology and Ethics (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) which also attempts to address issues related to the Bible, animals, and ethics. These works could broaden the critics' horizons and perhaps contribute a bit of panorama to their criticisms of a particular model.

[49]Ethical Concern 5.

[50]This again introduces the question of what constitutes "abuse of animals" within the Judeo-Christian mindset. The third chapter of this dissertation will introduce some writers from this tradition who use the Bible to advocate humane treatment of animals. However, since the battle continues to rage over the attempt to establish an objective, absolute definition of "humane treatment of animals" separate from particular worldviews, being a meat eater does not automatically mean "abuse of animals," at least within some worldviews.

[51]A good question is, "Why were they opposed to animal cruelty? For the sake of animals qua animals, or only because being cruel to animals could encourage cruelty to human beings?" Appendix A lists dozens of biblical texts which discourage animal abuse but which are nevertheless ambiguous as to the reason why. Thus, believers might advocate a certain level of humane treatment of animals within their philosophical/theological paradigm because they think the Bible says so. But they might not be able to say why the Bible says so.

[52]Sydney H. Coleman, Humane Society Leaders in America (Albany: American Humane Association, 1924):18.

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The group set forth six activities which they would attempt to carry out in the name of encouraging the humane treatment of animals. Among suggested activities such as circulating appropriate tracts, use of the press, etc., was "4. The periodical delivery of discourses from the pulpit."[53] It is reasonable to think that at least some SPCA members in fact preached sermons along this line from time to time.

Another Christian group associated with the humane movement was the Church Antivivisection League (circa 1890). Rather than allowing researchers total freedom in their treatment of animals (as was normally the case), the League held that "Morality and Religion have a right to impose and maintain limits upon 'Research' and 'Experiment' in the domain of nature."[54]

Even though Salt seems to have been a critic of the Judeo-Christian model, he does a brief survey of several books (beginning with one published in 1798) which contend that people are morally obliged to treat animals well. Some of the books in his survey are clearly working within a Judeo-Christian belief system.[55] Again, make note that this does not mean that they advocated vegetarianism, but they encouraged the "humane treatment of animals" within the Judeo-Christian paradigm. That is, rather than allowing any and every behavior toward animals, they said that there are limits to how a Jew or Christian should treat animals.[56]

If there has been a religion-wide lack of urgency for helping animals, it might not be the cause of the religions themselves, but rather a lack of effort in consistently applying the religious teachings to daily living. For generations, preachers have

---

[53]Ibid. 26.

[54]Richard D. French, Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975):350.

[55]Salt 199 ff.

[56]Once again, the reader is encouraged to consider Chapter Three of this dissertation as well as Appendix A.

decried the lack of commitment by many Christians in several areas (e.g., attendance at worship services and Bible classes, the giving of money to church work, helping the poor, evangelism, etc.) It might not be so much that preachers have consistently taught a thoroughgoing homocentrism, as it might be that a large number of professing Christians just do not act the way they talk.

Linzey and Regan have a somewhat related idea about this lack of application from faith to life. They think that over the past one hundred years or so "we have seen the slow but steady advance of secular humanism in the Western world" and that it has had an impact on most people in the West, not just religious people.[57] Thus, "The plain fact is, most humans don't place much value on the nonhuman world, animals included . . . ."[58] If selfishness and certain negative philosophies influence people not even to take better care of their fellow human beings, does it not make sense that they would not care much for advocating animal rights as well?

Joseph Sheldon tried to do a brief survey of twentieth century Christian literature prior to 1967 when White's speech was published. Though limited to works in English, and limited in other ways by the nature of his task, his is at least an attempt to get a handle on what has been said in print during this brief period. Sheldon presents his material with interesting bar graphs which show a definite and significant rise in writings which dealt with the topic of Christian beliefs about ecology.[59] Sheldon's article is an extremely focused study of the Christian literature, but it depicts a far better grasp of the bigger picture of Christian beliefs than is often portrayed in the current literature. It would be both refreshing and enlightening for

---

[57]Linzey and Regan, Animals and Christianity xi.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Joseph K. Sheldon, "Twenty-One Years After 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis': How Has the Church Responded?" Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 41 (September 1989):152-158.

someone to do more of that over the history of Christian and Jewish writings which relate to Christian beliefs about both ecology and (more to the focus of this paper) animals.

As the information on the previous pages shows, substantial problems arise when a writer tries to say meaningfully, "Here is THE teaching of Judaism" or "Here is THE teaching of Christianity." If a person is going to prove someone or something's guilt, the laws of evidence must be satisfied. Definitions must be secured. Overgeneralizations must be challenged. In the end, therefore, it seems that White and similar writers have only proved that there have been some avowed Bible believers who held a particular view about animals and there are some passages in the Bible that can be used to say the same thing.

## AMBIGUOUS USE OF THE TERM "EXPLOIT"

The preceding section of this chapter has dealt with an ambiguous use of the term "Christian" which White and others have used in their writings. Another ambiguous use of terms occurs when White says that according to Judaism, God created nature "explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes."[60] Then he points out,

> Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.[61]

What White means by the term "exploit" is very important. He seems to say that the significance of nature being created for human "benefit" and "rule" is the same as humanity's freedom to "exploit" it, as though if humans benefit from nature and/or rule over nature, that either (1) implies, or (2) means the same thing as exploit.

---

[60]White 1205.
[61]Ibid.

If he defines exploit as the human freedom to use nature in keeping with the *telos* God created it to accomplish, then there is no problem. But he seems to be using "exploit" in a pejorative sense, i.e., to abuse or misuse. If this is what White means, then he has not proven his case through either contextual or lexical support.

There is, of course, no clear biblical passage in which Jehovah says, "Exploit nature for your own selfish whims and desires!" If such a text existed, it would be the most quoted Bible verse in the animal *telos* discussions these days. Actually, the biblical text has a number of commands regarding the proper care of nature and of animals in particular (as will be shown in Appendix A).

## ASSORTED AMBIGUITIES

Another example of White's ambiguous use of terms is when he refers to "orthodox Christian arrogance" toward nature.[62] Again, the question is, what is the "orthodox" Christian view and how has it been documented? According to what standard would it then be counted as "arrogance"?

White says, "we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."[63] This statement overlooks a clear definition of crucial terms like "Christian" and "serve" and adds the allegation that the "worsening ecologic crisis" is a direct implication of a Christian axiom.

One way that White argues for this is the alleged connection between the Christian world view, and science and technology. He says that science and technology are "out of control" judging by "many of the ecologic effects . . . ."[64] Science and technology, therefore, (at least in their "out of control" mode) are

---

[62]White 1207.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid. 1206.

detrimental to ecology. But "modern technology is at least partly to be explained" as an outgrowth of Christianity.[65] White says,

> Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians.[66]

It still stirs the imagination that White feels qualified to speak about what Christians "almost universally" believe. But if all of this is true, and White thinks it is, then "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt."[67] So the relationship of science and technology to Christianity is so close that Christianity is even culpable for their "out of control" aspects.[68]

What, precisely, does it mean that science and technology have "grown out of" Christian attitudes? What is White getting at? It does not seem that his point is that Christianity is in some sense the efficient cause of science and technology. But if not, then how culpable can Christianity be for the excesses of tens of thousands of scientists and the millions of people who have been involved in developing and applying technologies, many of whom have no allegiance to Christianity? Everyone knows that the abuse of a thing does not argue against the thing itself, so what is White after with this point? He does not condemn all aspects of science and technology, but carefully specifies the part which is "out of control," and it seems like it is this "out of control" aspect that he condemns. Nevertheless, he believes that Christianity deserves to be blamed in a substantial way for at least partially

---

[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ironically, some unbelievers (like Madalyn Murray O'Hair) have blamed Christianity for hindering science and technology rather than encouraging them.

influencing technology's "out of control" behaviors. White does not work out the implications very carefully in this part of his argument.

One way in which he tries to make this point is on historical grounds, but he does not make a strong case for it. He basically says that the Christian world view is that nature is here to serve mankind, and that this led people to think that they could manipulate nature to their own ends, regardless of the cost to nature itself. He only traces this trail of causality in the most general way. However, even if he could firmly establish his premise, science and technology do not necessarily lead to the mistreatment of nature and animals since lots of people in those fields are animal advocates.

In response to White's charge, Thomas Derr holds that Christianity does not qualify as either a sufficient or necessary cause of science and technology. It is not a sufficient cause because where Christianity took hold in the eastern world, it did not have the same cultural impact. One of the elements of White's explanation of this phenomenon is that the eastern view of nature was "artistic rather than scientific"[69] and thus the outworkings of science and technology were different there than in the west. He also attempts to tie the difference between Christianity in the West and in the East to different views of free moral agency and its implications regarding sin. He concludes that the "implications of Christianity for the conquest of nature would emerge more easily in the Western atmosphere" but in the Greek influenced east, "science as we conceive it could scarcely flourish in such an ambience."[70]

In fact, White's very attempt to show that eastern Christianity did not produce the same scientific and technological results clearly proves that the problem is not specifically the fault of Christianity *per se*. According to White's case, it is only when

---

[69]White 1206.
[70]Ibid.

Christianity is changed by certain influences that it becomes harmful to ecology or leads to science and technology. But if that is the case, then why is Christianity itself the culprit rather than the impurities which twisted it?

In reality, the rise of science and technology requires a vast array of influences as is the case with any pervasive system of thought. Saying that these phenomena grew out of Christianity as though Christianity were a causal agent in the process is too simplistic. In fact, in the places where science and technology eventually occurred in the west, they took a thousand years to do so. With such a lengthy time lapse, Christianity does not appear to be a determinative factor. Even according to White's story, Christianity is only one of several contingencies.

Derr also questions whether Christianity is necessarily the foundation of such a cultural phenomenon, because science has done very well in China, ancient Greece, in the medieval Arabic world, and elsewhere in cultures which are either relatively or completely untouched by Christian influence.[71] If science and technology have done so well in non-Christian cultures, how realistic is it to put "a huge burden of guilt" for their excesses (note: their "out of control" aspects) on Christianity? In White's case, the conjoining of Christianity and science and technology (specifically their excesses) must be proved by more stringent measures than simply asserting that one system of thought has certain tenets that could have evolved from another system of thought because one preceded the other.

## THE ORIGIN OF HIERARCHICALISM

White[72] credits the Judeo-Christian model for divinely sanctioning, perpetuating, and/or perhaps originating the human/animal dichotomy and/or

---

[71]Thomas Sieger Derr, Creation At Risk? Religion, Science, and Environmentalism Michael Cromartie, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995):86-87.

[72]White 1205-1206.

dominionism. This naturally leads to humanity's abuse of nature. Several other authors[73] use a similar argument which traces humanity's abuse of animalkind to the Judeo-Christian model.

Again, the point is based on an oversimplification. The Judeo-Christian model did not originate the idea that humans and nature or humans and animals are ontologically or qualitatively different. First, such dichotomies and hierarchies are common among people who apparently have been uninfluenced by either Judaism or Christianity. Many so-called uncivilized people (like the American Indians), and people who lived prior to the origin of those religions or even western thought in general, were found to be very much involved in tribal rivalry, warfare, and particularly dominionism because they thought they were superior to others in general, and to animals in particular.[74] Some of these tribes, even the animistic ones, do not think much of animals as far as giving them rights or recognizing moral duties to them. Rather, they respect animals and appreciate the food, work, shelter, companionship, etc., that they give.

Anyone who watches a few anthropological programs on the Discover Channel or the local Public Broadcasting Station will learn that many primitive tribes give animals certain types of respect and incorporate them into their religions. But in their minds, animals were put here for legitimate human consumption (i.e., food, clothing, etc.) and are used in those ways.[75] To many westerners, the way these people treat animals would be described as brutish, callous, ruthless, maybe even animalistic. Yet, significant numbers of such communities were living this way either before or without

---

[73]Adams 15, 171; Sperling 15; Hargrove 117; et al.

[74]Jim Mason, An Unnatural Order: Uncovering the Roots of Our Domination of Nature and Each Other (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993):30.

[75]This paper's author has a number of friends who live in villages across Africa, India, the Panamanian jungle, and elsewhere who attest to this.

ever being influenced by Judeo-Christianity as the Western world knows it. As Mason says,

> Dominionism is also a fundamental belief in other societies that have a history of intensive agriculture . . . Thus, agrarian dominionism is a basic element in many religions and cultures around the world.[76]

A cursory glance at history and anthropology confirm Mason's view. Ancient Sumaria, Syria, Babylon, the Etruscans, Hittites, Canaanites, and others were firmly settled into what the writers in this chapter refer to as the man/animal dichotomy centuries before the world at large had ever heard of the book of Genesis. The Egyptians had a very similar view of hierarchies among animals, among each other, among other nations, and even among gods. Even their deification of certain animals did not mitigate against their use of animals for work, food, sacrifice, pleasure, clothing, divining, etc. In their book on animal husbandry, James Blakely and David Bade say,

> Egyptian Pharaohs associated themselves with having the "might of a bull" and, like the Canaanites, Romans, and Africans, had gods fashioned from cattle. Early Egyptians made great developments in the art of animal husbandry. Drawings done as early as 2625 B. C. show calves with hobbled front legs, and herdsmen delivering calves and branding cattle.[77]

Some writers who hold White's position on blaming the Judeo-Christian model for ecology problems, also use Aristotle as an example of the pre-Christian sentiment about animals (Preece and Chamberlain question whether Aristotle is properly represented by such writers[78]) and claim that his views (or some speak more generally of the Greek view) about the differences between human beings and animals helped form the Christian view of animals.[79] Thus, Aristotle (Singer prefers to use "Greek

---

[76]Ibid. 30.

[77]James Blakely and David H. Bade, 2nd ed. The Science of Animal Husbandry (Reston, Virginia: Reston Publishing Company, 1982):3.

[78]Preece and Chamberlain 13-14; Singer 186, 188-189, et al.

[79]See a response to Singer in Michael Leahy's aforementioned work 75-84.

antiquity"[80] and Linzey[81] and Kalechofsky[82] use the more generic "Hellenistic background") is partly to blame for ideas which later formed a vital part of the Christian world view. David Hume seems to have held a similar viewpoint because he believed that Greek thought, rationalism, and Platonism "wounded" Christianity, influencing minds as great as Aquinas to place less value on the nonhuman world.[83] Yet, Plato and Aristotle were neither Jewish nor Christian, but products of the highly advanced Greek culture. Greek thought also apparently developed outside the Jewish influence, and centuries prior to the advent of Christianity.[84]

Many more examples of dichotomies and societal stratification are easily observable in daily life and are not associated with the Judeo-Christian influence. Consider the rivalries between siblings, bosses versus employees, students versus teachers, tough kids versus weak kids, etc. There are even differences and "pecking orders" in nature in which various levels of superiority play themselves out within animal species (male and female, races, tribes, etc.). Frederick Zeuner's interesting work on domesticated animals says,

> Nor is man the only species of the animal kingdom which practises slavery or domestication. There are so many cases of the subjugation of one species by another that no more than a few examples can be given.[85]

As Jim Mason points out, domination among species was already old when Judaism began.

---

[80]Singer, Animal Liberation 186.

[81]Linzey 66-67.

[82]Kalechofsky 80.

[83]David Hume, Animals in the Christian Religion.

[84]Although writers like Eusebius believed that some of the Greeks not only were familiar with part of the Hebrew "oracles," but stole their ideas from the Hebrews. See his The Preparation For The Gospel, Books eleven and twelve.

[85]Frederick E. Zeuner, A History of Domesticated Animals (New York: Harper & Row, 1963):37.

> Dominionism did not begin with Christianity, nor did it begin earlier with Judaism. It began even earlier; it was already there when the Bible, even the oldest parts, were written.[86]

Are Judaism and/or Christianity the sources of all of the dichotomies and hierarchies in nature? Of course not. But they do teach that some type of dichotomy/hierarchy exists between humanity and nature and thus between humanity and animals. But these two religions are not the only ones that do so. Even religions uninfluenced by these two religions have taught the same basic ideas and yet do not seem to be targets of the writers. Maybe the cause lies deeper than any particular religion. Maybe it lies in the hearts of human beings, allowing them to use religious statements to their own ends. There is legitimate reason to question whether the writers' attempts to trace the abuse directly to Genesis chapter one is justifiable.

Second, maybe the truth is that humans just act selfishly on a regular basis and this allows them to affect the world around them in negative ways. They beat spouses, use children as sex objects, pay politicians illegally to sponsor bills, destroy furniture, give police officers illicit cash to overlook their crimes, write books that promote racism, get "free" public housing then destroy the housing provided for them, kill animals for entertainment, obtain government funding for research then waste it, use trusting individuals as objects of scams, tear up motel rooms, use positions of power to manipulate employees in corrupt ways, inject deadly substances into their own bodies, etc. These abuses are measurable, historical, empirical facts. They can be studied and quantified with reasonably accurate estimates. Bar graphs and pie charts can be made which vividly portray how many politicians use public funds for their own crooked purposes, how many (reported) spouses are beaten, how many people are hooked on drugs, etc. These are results, actions, behaviors by people as people, not by people as Christians.

---

[86]Mason 26.

But White seems to talk about why people think about nature in a certain way. White appears to say that people abuse nature because they accept the Christian attitude and that attitude facilitates their abusive behavior. The other authors seem to be saying the same thing about attitudes toward animals.[87] However, in a letter to the editor of *Science* magazine, Emiliani and Niskin of the Institute of Marine Science at Miami responded to White's charges, but similar comments would apply to the argument about animals as well.

> White's stringent demonstration that today's ecological catastrophe results directly from the Judeo-Christian tradition can be expanded to include other catastrophes of similar or greater magnitude which occurred earlier in time. Martin [*Nature* 212, 339 (1966)] has discussed at some length the early overkills which destroyed 40 percent of the mammalian fauna in Africa and 70 percent in North America. These overkills, which took place, respectively, 50,000 and 12,000 years ago, clearly demonstrate that the Judeo-Christian tradition is considerably older than generally assumed.[88]

Realistically, is it legitimate to pool the majority of people, or the average person, into one strict category of motivation? That is, "they are mistreating nature because of their adherence to a Christian axiom." Why is it not more reasonable to conclude that abuse of nature or animals is simply due to human pride, anger, laziness, selfishness, lack of foresight and insight, etc. (none of which is in keeping with either Jewish or Christian theology)? The case could be made that the teachings of Judeo-Christianity offer a solution to the problem of abusing the things around us, rather than being the cause of it.

Richard Hiers, is one of a growing number of theologians and religious philosophers who claim that the Bible (and the New Testament in particular) condemns the abuse of the earth and its animals.[89] He concludes that, "There is no

---

[87]Adams 15, 171; Sperling 15; Hargrove 117; et al.

[88]Cesare Emiliani and Shale Niskin, Letter to the Editor Science (May 12, 1967):738.

[89]Richard H. Hiers, "Ecology, Biblical Theology, and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment" Zygon 19 (1984):43-59.

biblical warrant for degrading the earth or destroying other life species."[90] Stafford also says the biblical teaching is that "we *are* responsible for the animals."[91] Rowley agrees that Christianity has caused some problems with animals, but also considers it a puzzling question as to why "early Christianity" regarded subhuman life with indifference. He states,

> The fault was not, certainly in the spirit or teachings of the founder of the Christian faith. No more wonderful word was ever spoken with reference to man's attitude toward all sentient life below him, or with more wide-reaching significance in this direction, that the saying of Jesus which tells us that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without our Father.[92]

Albert Leffinwell holds a similar position, seeing no direct connection between the teachings of Jesus and poor treatment of animals. Leffinwell refers to Jesus' statement of the reciprocity principle in the form of the Golden Rule, and comments, "who can begin to estimate its potency in the stimulation of that humane sentiment, that pity for suffering, which underlies our modern civilization?"[93]

Leax and Wolfe add a significant concept which is being used by a host of the more recent Bible/animal advocates (such as Richard Young, Andrew Linzey, and James Gustafson) who propose theocentrism as the *solution* to humanity's environmental and animal problems rather than their bane.[94] They say,

> Scripture does not teach anthropocentrism. Scripture teaches us to regard the world from a theocentric perspective. The creation exists for the pleasure of God, not humanity.[95]

---

[90]Ibid. 56.

[91]Stafford 21.

[92]Rowley 22.

[93]Albert Leffingwell The Vivisection Question 2nd ed. (Chicago: Vivisection Reform Society, 1907):79.

[94]Richard A. Young, Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and Their Solutions (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994); Andrew Linzey, Christianity and the Rights of Animals (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1987); James M. Gustafson, Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[95]Leax and Wolfe 166.

Third, the concept of dichotomy in itself does not logically entail friction between the two sides, i.e., one side of the dichotomy abusing the other. That is, if certain biblical texts said that humans and animals are qualitatively different, that would not in itself demand, imply, or license the abuse of animals. Other biblical texts command human beings to take care of animals. There is no logical reason why the former texts must contradict the latter. Of course, it is possible for conflict between the two groups to "grow out" of the differences, but the distinction *per se* is not the efficient cause of the conflict.

## THE BIBLE'S AMBIVALENCE ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE

In addition to the things that White and others have said, another troubling factor in this controversy is what many writers see as the apparent absence of biblical passages which directly address the issue of how human beings should treat animals, and the concordant paucity of religious books and journal articles on the topic. John Boyce and Christopher Lutes observe that "few theologians have commented on the manner of humanity's relationship to animals."[96] Even when theologians make comments on the issue, they seem to use little or no biblical material in their writings to substantiate their views.

An interesting example is J. G. Lawler's religious article entitled, "On the Rights of Animals" in *Anglican Theological Review*[97] which claims to give biblical insight into how humans should treat animals. Although he alludes to a couple of biblical texts, he gives not a single textual citation to enable readers to look in their Bibles and see for themselves what the texts say about the subject. Why did Lawler not cite several relevant texts and draw his points from them? Is the considerable

---

[96]John R. Boyce with Christopher Lutes, "Animal Rights: How Much Pain is a Cure Worth?" Christianity Today September, 6, 1985:85.

[97]47 (January 1965): 180-190.

scarcity of quoted and/or cited biblical texts in articles like Lawler's simply due to the dearth of clear regulations in the Bible? If so, then well meaning theologians are necessarily limited to writing articles which attempt to address the subject of the Bible and the humane treatment of animals, but which can never point out very many helpful and insightful texts because they just are not available.

For an author like Singer, the lack of explicit biblical condemnation of inhumane treatment of animals is a big problem. He says, "The New Testament is completely lacking in any injunction against cruelty to animals, or any recommendation to consider their interests."[98] If he is accurate, it could be part of the reason why some have perceived a lack of Christian zeal for protecting animals. That is, if the biblical text does not say such things, how can its adherents be expected to believe them?

Animal advocates have been dealing with this enigma for centuries. After reading much of the humane movement's literature from the nineteenth century, Richard French thinks that in the British antivivisection movement, "even attempts to find simple biblical authority for antivivisection foundered."[99] They looked to the Bible for ammunition in their battle to condemn the practice of vivisection and could find little help in its pages. French mentions the Catholic tradition that humanity has a duty not to treat animals "wantonly or cruelly;"[100] but that is only Catholic tradition, not a clear scriptural injunction. French also contends that church members were conspicuously absent from the antivivisection movement. There were some, he says, but only a few.[101]

Linzey agrees with French's point, and broadens its application when he says,

---

[98]Singer, Animal Liberation 191.
[99]Richard French 345.
[100]Ibid. 346.
[101]Ibid.

> The Christian tradition has shown an ambivalent attitude towards animal welfare. While it is often commonly supposed that Christian churches have taught kindness to animals and urged responsibility for our use of them, evidence to support this view is small indeed . . . Very few, if any, Catholic or Protestant theologians have questioned man's right to exploit animals and to use animal life for the needs of man.[102]

He adds,

> It is perhaps not very surprising, therefore, that many animal protectionists believe that the indifference shown to animal welfare by religious institutions has been one of the main obstacles to humane accomplishments.[103]

Has this situation occurred because the ambiguity of biblical texts on the issue has opened the door for abuse of animals, rather than discouraging it? Some writers think so. Richard Morris' statement summarizes their position well.

> For where a reverence for all life is missing in doctrine, it is difficult to see how man-feeling and man-thinking can call such a deficient doctrine a religion. A basic principle is needed to unite the universe into one ethical whole. Law and morality collapse where an ethics fails to prevail, and this is a social fact that we overlook at our peril.[104]

Morris also thinks that the biblical ambiguity on this subject has been detrimental to the cause of animal rights. "The ambivalence of the Bible in deciding the true relationship between man and the animals often puts its arguments beyond the pale of reasonable discussion."[105] He further says,

> The chance for a strong "optimistic-ethical world-view" to emerge from Christianity, especially one that would link the natural and the ethical worlds together into a monistic whole, seems frightfully remote.[106]

Why is there so little explicit information in the Bible about the humane treatment of animals (and of nature in general)? The Bible was not intended to be a

---

[102]Andrew Linzey, Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment of Man's Treatment of Animals (London: SCM Press, 1976):9.

[103]Ibid. 10.

[104]Richard Knowles Morris, "Man and Animals: Some Contemporary Problems," On The Fifth Day: Animal Rights and Human Ethics, ed. Richard Knowles Morris and Michael W. Fox (Washington, D. C.: Acropolis Books, 1978):31.

[105]Morris 26-27.

[106]Ibid. 30.

compendium of direct commandments about how and how not to behave in every situation that every culture would ever consider important. There are, however, principles in the Bible which address the basic issues and therefore provide guidelines and parameters for behavior in situations which it does not directly address.

Bible writers were writing at a time when, on the average, the lives of people and animals were far more integrated than is the case in America today. They lived with animals, worked with them, cared for them, etc., on a more expansive and universal level than today when pets provide almost all of the animal interaction people have. The biblical writers lived in times and places where a lot of what modern writers squabble over was commonly understood and did not need to be verbalized. They were "at one with nature" in the way many non-American cultures are today. Some American children think that milk comes from a cardboard carton or a plastic jug, butter is square or round and comes from a plastic package, and meat from shrinkwrap. For the Bible writers and many others in the world today, milk comes from manipulating a cow or goat udder, butter from working a churn, and meat from killing and cutting up an animal. Growing up in this culture has an immeasurably profound effect on one's thinking about animals and innumerable other topics.

Vast differences in culture and technology sometimes result in modern writers asking questions of the Bible which biblical writers were not addressing. This situation might leave the theologian who tries to write a journal article about a biblical attitude toward animals with a feeling well expressed by E. S. Turner's statement, "Bible text-hunters do not find a great deal for their comfort."[107]

However, neither the Bible nor mainstream Christian writing has dealt with a lot of issues in philosophy of mind, linguistics, aesthetics, etc., which some

---

[107]Turner 22.

philosophers think are defining, important, and vital. Some people who are heavily involved in these fields may think that "Christianity" has been silent for some darker reason, but the Bible simply is not a book about everything, not even about every specific moral question. The question remains, "Is the Bible in fact silent on this issue?" This is the task of Appendix A, viz., to attempt to locate texts that either explicitly or implicitly deal with animal *telos*, and thus the proper treatment of animals.

## WHITE'S SPEECH IN RETROSPECT

A few years after delivering his 1967 speech, White wrote "Continuing the Conversation" in 1973 to respond to some of his critics. White felt that he had been misunderstood. He claimed that he did not intend to say that Christianity was the problem; and he conceded that "no sensible person could maintain that all ecologic damage is, or has been, rooted in religious attitudes."[108] He added, "Christianity obviously is not the necessary base for a dynamic technology" but "Christianity in its Latin form . . . provided a set of presuppositions remarkably favorable to technological thrust."[109] If this is all he really meant in his speech, that criticism could be accurately said of any system of thought that had similar ideas. Does that really make Christianity significant culpable?

Rene Dubos is an example of the multitude of writers whom White thought had misrepresented his views. Dubos does not say that White blamed Christianity for "all" environmental problems, but he understands White to have said something almost that encompassing. He thinks that White said,

---

[108]Ibid. 57.

[109]Lynn White, Jr. "Continuing the Conversation" in Western Man and Environmental Ethics, Ian G. Barbour, ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973):58.

> biblical teaching has had such a profound and lasting influence on western civilization that it has made modern man lose any feeling for nature and to be concerned with the conquest of nature for his own benefit.[110]

If White did not say that Christianity was a necessary cause of science and technology and their negative impact on environment and animals, and if he did not say that Christianity deserves a significant burden of the blame, then what did he say? Derr claims that both in the "Continuing the Conversation" article as well as in personal conversations, White now says that when he used the phrase "orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature" he did not mean to say, "that arrogance toward nature is orthodox Christian doctrine, only that presumably orthodox Christians have been arrogant toward nature."[111] That certainly softens the blow which many people thought was dealt by his earlier speech. His earlier position seemed to be that there is some direct connection between damaged ecology and orthodox Christianity. Now he is only saying that some apparently ("presumably") orthodox Christians have had an arrogant attitude toward nature.

With similar relaxing of earlier statements, White's original speech does not seem to be as earth shattering as many had originally thought it was. When it was delivered, the speech seemed to be making the argument that (in Derr's wording) "Christians were heedless of nature *because* they were Christians"[112] as though there was an intimate relationship. But now White seems to be have revised his point of view, leading Derr to conclude,

> White retreated to saying only that Christians, like human beings everywhere, found it possible to misappropriate certain elements from their religious tradition to serve their selfish ends.[113]

---

[110]Rene Dubos, "A Theology of the Earth" in Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology Ian G. Barbour, ed. (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973):46.

[111]Derr 88.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid.

That makes it sound as though Christianity carries no particularly unique responsibility for the ecological damage which White and others had charged. If this is true, the fields of primitive psychology, military strategy, or even early medicine could conceivably hold as much guilt as Christianity for the ecological woes since they contained ideas which could have been misappropriated, combined with other ideas, and found to be destructive to nature and animals.

The ramifications of White's lecture have not all been bad. Fred Van Dyke, Ph.D. (a Wildlife Research Biologist) is an example of a Bible believer working in a scientific vocation who has an interest in both religion and science and thinks that he is seeing a change for the better on both sides of the controversy because of White's lecture. He says that in the years following White's speech, many of the written works produced by the Christian community manifested two responses. First, they spent some time refuting White's charges. Second, they worked on developing a proper Christian theory of environmentalism.

That twofold response brought about two changes evident in much of the literature produced after White's lecture. First, the writers attempted to make environmental concerns an more important part of the Christian world view. Second, from the study Van Dyke has done in this area, he believes that "the scientific community has largely ceased placing the entire blame for ecologic problems on the biblical world view . . . ."[114] He does not agree with all of the charges that White makes, but he thinks some good things have resulted from it. The same could likely be said about the speech's impact on the discussion about animals. Since 1967 many books and articles have been published from the Christian perspective about how human beings should think about animals. That is encouraging.

---

[114]Fred G. Van Dyke, "Ecology and the Christian Mind: Christians and the Environment in a New Decade" Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 43 (September 1991):174.

## CONCLUSIONS

One question which emerges from this interchange of ideas about what the Bible says regarding animal *telos*, is that there is such a diversity of opinions about it. How can so many writers take such divergent views about what a single document says about this topic? It is precisely this question that forms the heart of this dissertation. Discovering, and particularly, *agreeing* on what the Bible says about this topic is a far more tenuous subject than one might think at first glance. There are a number of difficulties that hinder agreement between writers on this issue. Some of these difficulties are the subjects of Chapter Two.

Chapter 2

## The Philosophical Significance of Biblical Beliefs

Establishing what the Bible says about animal *telos* might on the surface appear to be a simplistic task and the most important issue in this paper: find the biblical texts that talk about it, and that concludes the project. But a number of philosophical problems are associated with this apparently simple undertaking. Indeed, as astonishing as it might seem, the central question for this paper may be why so many writers use "Bible teachings" (sometimes even the same Bible verses) in their argumentation about animal *telos*, yet reach such divergent conclusions. This question is so important to the paper's focus that some attempt must be made to address it.

This chapter will examine the following areas endemic to the discussion of the Bible and animal *telos*: (1) the role of presuppositions, and the significance of only a few of many metaphysical and epistemological questions such as (2) the truth of theism, (3) the verifiability of revelation, (4) the authoritative status of the Bible, (5) the historicity of the Bible, and finally, (6) the relevance of hermeneutics. This approach will enable the reader to see that an intricate network of philosophical problems arise when a writer attempts to affirm THE biblical teaching on animal *telos*.

The purpose of this chapter is not to walk the path of truth, disproving and thus cutting off the optional paths at each fork. It is to show that there are many alternatives on almost any given topic and should also let the reader know that this writer is aware of the complicated web of issues involved. This should result in a clearer vision that when philosophers, ethicists, and theologians disagree about what the Bible says about animal *telos*, massive problems can and do arise because of what can be enormous philosophical gaps between the writers on one or on dozens of

important issues, any one of which can prohibit a meeting of the minds on the issue of animal *telos*. This necessitates arguing from authority, or at least quoting a lot of authorities in different fields in order to establish the fact that credentialed and respected scholars differ about even the most rudimentary issues in this discussion.

Therefore, it is important for the reader to know that this chapter is not about solving all of those issues in these few pages. It is less a proof chapter than a perspective chapter. It is about making the reader aware of the intricacy of debating about animal *telos* in the Bible when the debate's interlocutors are virtually speaking different languages to one another because of their differing religious epistemologies. However, along with this main purpose for this chapter of the dissertation, since the philosophical position of the dissertation itself comes from a paradigm composed of many of these options, it seems necessary to show from time to time why this paper accepts the positions it does on those options. Nevertheless, it should not be seen as an attempt to prove all of the ideas which compose the traditional position about the Bible.

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TOPIC

Some might not see the philosophical nature of this study since it involves some aspects of religion. However, because a topic has religious interests does not mean that it has no philosophical interest. The matter at hand is philosophical because it raises so many philosophical issues.

First, biblical religion and animal *telos* is a philosophical issue because it addresses matters of ontology. What animals are on an ontological order and in the grand scale of things seems to be at the heart of how human beings should think of and treat them. This is precisely what several authors contend in chapter three of this dissertation. The discussion of the essential nature of animals also leads to an ontological discussion of humans. That human beings are located at a different point

on the ontological graph is why some thinkers believe that human beings should be thought of and treated differently than animals. What is it about an animal's essential nature that might sway the conversation toward using animals for human needs, or away from this? This dissertation argues that biblical insights can help to answer this question.

Second, this is a matter of axiology. That is, the entire discussions of what does and does not justify a being's inclusion in the moral arena are questions of both ontology and axiology. An animal's *telos* directly relates to its value in the multi-tiered ecosystem and thus its overall value in the natural world. The subsequent discussion of how human beings should treat animals is an ethical issue. These controversial topics are central to this dissertation. What is an animal's essential value to nature, what is its value to humanity, and which should have priority over the other when conflicts arise? Speaking normatively now, how ought human beings conduct themselves toward animals? One of the most obvious difficulties connected with this paper has to do with why people hold such dramatically different views on this issue. One can see very quickly that much of the problem stems from their very different ethical and religious systems of belief which need to be examined philosophically.

Third, the topics of this dissertation address several key areas in the philosophy of religion, the critical study of religious alternatives. Philosophy of religion is one of the busiest branches of philosophy in some quarters, religious epistemology being an extremely important part of it. As this chapter will show, important turning points which lead people into different directions in relation to the bigger question of this paper, have to do with the existence of God, the viability of religious experience, the nature and reliability of divine revelation, etc. Philosophers of religion have reflected extensively and philosophically about the legitimacy of appeal to divine revelation and other matters of philosophical theology for more than two

thousand years. The sections of this dissertation which deal with an appeal to divine revelation for insight into the proper consideration and treatment of animals simply represent an extension of the central issue of thinking philosophically about revelation to current ethical and religious concerns.

Fourth, this dissertation takes a closer look at the role of philosophical presuppositions. Discussions of the fields of philosophical hermeneutics, multicultural backgrounds, and related topics have become important in epistemology recently. For example, what are the underlying facets of a philosophical system that enable or force people to interpret a given set of facts in certain ways? Why do people disagree on seemingly rudimentary questions?

Fifth, this dissertation involves matters of philosophy of history. What is history, and is it possible to reconstruct it in any absolute or objective sense? The effort to circumnavigate the fallacies associated with writing or understanding history is itself very much a philosophical endeavor.[1] These play a key role in this chapter of the dissertation.

Because appeals to revelation in Western religion have traditionally said something about the general nature of reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), and values (axiology), there is clearly some overlap in subject matter between religion and philosophy. Revelation makes truth claims in all of these philosophical areas, but these truth claims often conflict with truth claims made by philosophers. Thus, philosophers should confront these truth claims that are made on the basis of revelation. They should examine them in light of philosophical insights from axiology, metaphysics, logic, epistemology, and so forth. The presence of religious influence in a philosophical discussion makes it no less philosophical.

---

[1]See David Hackett Fischer, Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1970).

Philosophers often study religion and the undergirdings of religiously held beliefs without the examination process becoming merely a religious exercise.

Finally, philosophical methodologies are employed in this dissertation. In many places, the meaning(s) of basic concepts like "*telos*," "slavery," "revelation," and "historical" are analyzed, and problems are resolved partly by keeping track of basic meanings. Rational arguments are also employed throughout the dissertation, especially in defending the legitimacy of appeals to divine revelation in general and to religious insights into ethics and animals issues in particular. For example, in chapter one, this dissertation attempts logically to test the legitimacy of some of the current criticisms leveled against Judeo-Christianity's holy books as material which incites ill treatment of animals, to argue against them, and to argue in favor of a more cautious view. In chapter two, this dissertation attempts logically to separate several of the underlying issues involved in making statements like "the Bible says X about this issue" and to argue against the liberal view on several of these points and in favor of the traditional view.

Philosophers give reasons for their conclusions and defend them as best they can. This dissertation has tried to do this, but acknowledges that readers may or may not have doubts about its success, and may or may not take an interest in the issues that are raised.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESUPPOSITIONS IN THIS DISCUSSION

Presuppositions have a rich heritage in Christian apologetics and the exegesis of the Bible. Cornelius Van Til, known as the father of presuppositional apologetics, "begins his apologetic with the presuppositions of the triune God of Christianity and the truth of Scripture" and argues that only if people begin with these presuppositions

can they "interpret facts according to their true meaning."[2] His entire philosophical system is built on the presupposition that presuppositions are vitally important to the way any person understands reality.

Philosophical presuppositions do indeed play a very important role in the way any person interprets empirical data. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. says that attitudes like optimism or pessimism can influence the way people interpret literary or historical documents.[3] Readers always need to be aware of the role that their own presuppositions play in the way they understand a text, but they also must consider the way a writer's presuppositions influence what he or she writes. This is especially true when writers employ a controversial religious book like the Bible (e.g., in their discussions of animal *telos*).

Presuppositions are so powerful, Hans-Georg Gadamer thinks, that "Even a master of historical method is not able to remain completely free from the prejudices of his time, his social environment, his national position . . . ."[4] If presuppositions are so influential, what impact do they have on the way a twentieth century North American philosopher interprets a biblical text, compared to the way a third century North African interpreted it?

More to the focus of this chapter, how differently would a non-religious philosopher and a process theologian interpret what the Bible says?[5] Their distinctive

---

[2]Gordon R. Lewis. Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics (Chicago: Mood Bible Institute, 1976):37.

[3]E. D. Hirsch, Jr. Validation and Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University, 1967):39.

[4]J. M. Robinson, "Hermeneutics Since Barth," The New Hermeneutic J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974):1-77. See also Bill Flatt, "The Function of Presuppositions and Attitudes in Biblical Interpretation," Biblical Interpretations: Principles and Practice: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers, and Timothy D. Hadley, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986):62-72.

[5]To see how religious beliefs affect interpretation see John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey, eds., Doing Theology In Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991); Donald K. McKim, What Christians Believe About the Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985); and David Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

philosophical paradigms will most certainly affect what they see when they both read the same Bible verses. That is why presuppositions become so prominent in this paper. Something that further exacerbates the situation is that it is not standard procedure for writers to provide a list of their presuppositions every time they write an article. That leaves significant numbers of readers in the dark about extremely important information. To some extent, it is almost as if they have defied Voltaire's maxim, having begun a debate without first clearly defining their terms. Readers who do not know writers' beliefs may be confused about why they reach contrary conclusions from the same Bible verses.

In Appendix A, this dissertation tries to present the biblical texts so that readers from different backgrounds can view the raw data (i.e., the biblical information which is relevant to animal *telos*) and reach their own conclusions. But of course, as Richard Niebuhr says, "Whatever be the case in other human inquiries there is no such thing as disinterestedness in theology . . . ."[6] Accordingly, this paper has its own metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings. Its boundaries are inevitably drawn from a particular philosophical stance, but this does not appear to be of such a nature that it would hinder a reader's access to the information in Appendix A. Nonetheless, if readers know some of the pieces that form the larger philosophical paradigms within which writers are thinking, they are in a much better position to understand certain things about this paper, the appendix, and the writers' views contained here. Then they might understand why the writers involved in this controversy say what they say.

For this purpose, this chapter will briefly survey some of the philosophical presuppositions that writers bring to the discussion of the Bible and animal *telos*, and in doing so will also bring to light some of the beliefs behind this chapter. This will (1)

---

[6]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Collier Books, 1941):25.

assist readers in keeping the biblical data in perspective, (2) better enable readers to distinguish between the biblical data and a writer's personal beliefs, (3) set up points of comparison that somewhat level the playing field among the writers, and (4) give some insight into why they hold their views. Through a sort of step by step process, this chapter will attempt to deal with some of the major philosophical problems that have plagued the discussion of the Bible and animal *telos*.

## FOUNDATIONS OF A RELEVANT EPISTEMOLOGY

As Aristotle said, "Those who wish to succeed must ask the right preliminary questions" (Metaphysics 2.3.1). This chapter attempts to deal with the problem Clark Pinnock raises when he says,

> The central problem for theology is *its own epistemological base*. From what fountainhead does theology acquire the information from which she forms her doctrinal models and tests her hypotheses? What is the *principium theologiae* which measures and authenticates the subject matter for theology and preaching? No endeavor in theology can *begin* until some kind of answer is given.[7]

How can a person identify the pertinent questions which sufficiently ferret out the key religious or non-religious presuppositions in a controversy like this one? One could begin with a lengthy series of questions about the nature of truth and whether truth can be known, whether one can know *all* truth, whether one must know *all* truth before she can know *some* truth, whether the laws or principles of thought are legitimate, whether other minds exist, whether the universe is rational, whether human beings are free moral agents who creatively choose their beliefs and actions, or whether human nature and the specific genetic makeup of each individual determines her or his beliefs and behaviors, etc. One could begin with a response to some of David Hume's sceptical questions which dig at the root of many of these "starting points."

---

[7]Clark Pinnock, Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971):11.

Or, one could begin with some of the deep linguistic problems connected to this discussion. Is religious and philosophical language capable of expressing meanings such that communication can be carried on in the way the common person thinks it can? What is the meaning of meaning? Do books (perhaps especially in the case of religious books) contain their own meanings and interpretations absolutely, or should the focus of "Bible study" be on language as it affects the reader?

Of course, this naturally leads to a dilemma at the conceptual level of hermeneutics as presented by the reader-response philosophy espoused by writers like Culler, Fish, Rorty, and others.[8] According to the reader-response theory, the interpreter of any language, written or otherwise communicated, is epistemologically "blocked" from ever understanding authorial intent. Hence, it assumes too much even to talk about what the Bible "says" *per se* about anything. Although this view is worthy of consideration, the logical consequences of it would lead to the conclusion that the readers of this document also suffer such fate. If not logically contradictory, at the very least this view is pragmatically counterproductive for present purposes.

Is literary philosophy the place to begin a proper epistemological discussion for this chapter, or should it start with the philosophy of history? There are troubling questions about how closely a person can come to knowing past events. For example, is history attainable on some objective order, is it purely subjective and speculative, or is history a mixture of both subjectivity and objectivity? How precise must history be before we can rightly say that we know something about the past?[9] These are only a

---

[8]For a discussion of how these and other recent linguistic theories affect hermeneutics, see Anthony C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

[9]This will be an important part of some issues that arise in this chapter. However, many of the underlying issues cannot be covered here. Some good sources relating to fundamental issues raised in attempting to prove historical events would be R. G. Collingwood's The Idea of History (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) and L. B. Cebik's Concepts, Events, and History (Washington D. C.: University Press of America, 1978).

few of the *many* questions, answers to which form the foundation of virtually every philosophical enterprise. Once the subject of religion is broached, the problem of presuppositions arises even more starkly because that subject deals with historical deliberations, beliefs based on testimony and rational reflection, claims of personal encounters with a metaphysical realm, cultural perspectivalism, etc., all of which to some extent impact the topic of this paper.

Attention could and likely *should* be given to rudimentary tenets of religious belief like the philosophy of a proper approach to justification and perhaps even to a study of what should constitute the basic criteria for a religious epistemology.[10] Religious topics also involve the perennial problem of the appropriate relationship between reason and religion and whether faith and knowledge are mutually exclusive.

Clearly, the power of presuppositions is awesome. Any discussion of religion, especially a study of the nature and background of religious books, should be approached with a sensitivity to this notion because it will furnish tremendously helpful explanations where otherwise there would seem to be none. Presuppositions to be considered should be those that have a crucial role in forming the conclusions reached by the thinkers involved, and that seem to press the conversation in one direction or the other.

## THE QUESTION OF THEISM

One of several good places to begin is the existence of God because it has such substantial implications for issues like the relevance of the Bible and animal *telos*. However, this territory is as complex as the questions previously mentioned. There are always questions within and about questions.

---

[10]A good starting place for these topics would be David L. Wolfe, Epistemology: The Justification of Belief (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1982).

This paper focuses on the data contained in a book which some writers claim is from God. If the Bible *is* from God in some way, it contains extremely valuable information on many topics, including animal *telos*. If the book is not from God, then its information is far less important, although it might be relevant in other ways (e.g., anthropologically, sociologically, historically, etc.). The bottom line is that if God does not exist, this book is not a message from God; and even if God does exist, the book, or parts of it, may not be from God. So, how do differences of opinion about God's existence and nature affect writers' views on animal *telos* and the Bible?

The alternatives for atheistic writers lie along a spectrum. Since they are not amenable to any supernatural input on the matter, they could interpret human and non-human nature in several ways, some of which could be characterized as pro-animal and others just the opposite.

Theistic writers also have a wide range of views on biblical interpretation and animal *telos*. Pantheists, panentheists, henotheists, deists, et al., could use some of the atheistic arguments and presuppositions about animal *telos* insofar as they do not exclude theism, but they can also use arguments that appeal to a metaphysical, supernatural order.[11] From the theist's point of view, holy persons, holy books, even the Supreme Being(s) might have something relevant to say about animal *telos*. If so, that would be very valuable insight.

There does not seem to be a single strict code regarding animal *telos* and our duties to or involving animals that is shared by all religious people. Often they hold different positions. Often they agree, but for different reasons. Some religious groups incorporate the Bible to some extent as one of their holy books; but even among them,

---

[11]It might make a difference whether a theist were a strict creationist or a theistic evolutionist. Evolution could present a broader set of alternatives than available to either the atheistic evolutionist or to the strict theistic creationist.

the extent to which they think God had a role in producing the Bible varies. More discussion of this will come later in this chapter.

A deist could look at "the book of nature"[12] and interpret animal *telos* in several ways, maybe in favor of or in opposition to what some consider the humane treatment of animals. A Hindu might be in favor of animal welfare as she defines it, and thus agree with some of the deists, but for her own reasons (e.g., reincarnation). A Voodoun priest could kill dozens of chickens and cows as he allows one of the gods to dictate these actions, but a Buddhist might see animals as a valuable part of nature, worthy of great honor and care in accord with the "do no harm" doctrine of *ahimsa.*[13]

Then again, Israelites might think it perfectly acceptable to kill thousands of animals for sacrifices to Jehovah, because Jehovah spoke to their predecessors and commanded the practice. Animists might respect and protect certain animals because of the powerful spirits that dwell in them. Christians could argue that people should respect and protect animals because God has created everything for a purpose, and that implies that each creation should be allowed to fulfill its purpose. Some do this in chapter three of this dissertation. A creature's purpose could either be discovered in a holy book that spells it out, from a direct revelation from God, or by simple observation.

Considering the diversity of views within the category of theism alone, there is little mystery why an atheist like Peter Singer and a minister like Andrew Linzey would reach different conclusions about the biblical teachings regarding animal *telos.* Since they accept different presuppositions on a very basic issue like theism, the ideological gap between them is enormous on certain issues like this one.

---

[12]Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology (New York: Freethought Press Association, n.d.):180.

[13]David S. Noss and John B. Noss, A History of the World's Religions 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990):165.

This writer takes a monotheistic stance and finds some of the cosmological arguments to be persuasive. A combination of Richard Taylor's illustrations,[14] Richard Swinburne's careful argumentation,[15] and some of the contingency arguments[16] coupled with recent discussions in physics[17] make a good place to begin a case that favors the existence of a creator God.

The teleological argument is also finding new voices. Taylor's philosophical illustrations make the argument accessible to many readers.[18] Representatives from philosophy, mathematics, microbiology, and other sciences[19] are presenting new material along with some old truths in new robes.[20]

The ancient debate over the origin and nature of morality continues (as with the "nature or nurture" discussion). Perhaps with roots in Kant's discussion, C. S. Lewis powerfully argues that morality is a deeply seated phenomenon which must be explained. But he claims that naturalistic explanations fail to provide satisfactory answers.[21] Many naturalistic attempts have been offered before and after Lewis' brief comments, from efforts to relegate morality to biology via sociobiology's genetic approach, to Nietzsche's perspectivalism. But the moral argument continues to impress a large number of thinkers.

---

[14]Richard Taylor, Metaphysics 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974):102-120.

[15]Richard Swinburne, The Existence of God rev ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[16]For example, see Bruce R. Reichenbach, The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1972); and, Mortimer J. Adler, How To Think About God: A Guide for the 20th Century Pagan (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980).

[17]Stephen W. Hawking, A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988); Paul Davies, The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

[18]Taylor 102-120.

[19]Michael Behe's presentation of "irreducible complexity" has generated a lot of discussion lately. See his Darwin's Black Box (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

[20]For example, see J. P. Moreland, ed., The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

[21]C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1952):17-39.

Throughout the history of philosophy a number of negative responses have been made to the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments.[22] Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion raises a number of important questions which must not be glossed over or too quickly dismissed. These objections and others (most notably the problem of evil) notwithstanding, this writer takes the position that theism is the most rational position in light of the evidence at hand and that the objections can be answered reasonably. Working out all the details would require a lengthy treatment.

## THE QUESTION OF A VERIFIABLE REVELATION

If everyone in the Bible and animal *telos* controversy agreed that only one Supreme Being exists, they would still have to consider whether this Being has sent or is now sending a revelation to humanity, and if so, what form it would take. There is notable disagreement among monotheists themselves and between monotheists and polytheists on the nature of revelation and how it conveys truth.[23] Neo-orthodox writers disagree, liberals disagree, and conservatives disagree. But the central idea of revelation is generally considered to be what H. Richard Niebuhr called "divine self-disclosure."[24] Though most theists would probably concur, they think that there are many conceivable ways (dreams, visions, books, speeches, etc.) and times that God could disclose himself.

Although this paper deals only with one religious book, many monotheists accept books other than the Bible as authoritative. Moslems add the Koran as further word from Allah. Mormons accept the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and

---

[22]For representative overviews see Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, eds. New Essays In Philosophical Theology (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955); Kai Nielsen, Contemporary Critiques of Religion (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971); and, Peter Angeles, Critiques of God (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1976).

[23]Gerald T. Sheppard, "How Do Neoorthodox and Post-Neoorthodox Theologians Approach the 'Doing of Theology' Today?" Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer John Woodbridge and Thomas McComiskey, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991):449.

[24]Niebuhr 113.

other books as revelations from God. Some monotheists reject the New Testament as authoritative but accept other parts of the Bible in addition to extra-biblical materials as holy books. In the broad sense of the Jewish tradition there is the Torah, the Mishnah, the Gemara, the pseudepigrapha, the Kabbalah, and the Old Testament apocrypha. Several world religions have holy books that supplant the Bible (like the Vedas and the Gita). Are all of these books legitimate revelations from a higher power? Should a person choose from among them, and if so, how?

This raises what is probably the most important epistemological question at the base of many of these issues: justification. What does it take to qualify as a divine revelation and what should be the criteria for recognizing a revelation in any form, much less a divine book?[25]

Much of the authority of the Bible is associated with people such as prophets and apostles who were ear and eyewitnesses of the events they describe. But they and others also claimed that God's Spirit had an important role in producing their speeches and writings. Therefore, they claimed to speak and write God's word, but how did they know it was not just their own thoughts they were speaking and writing? John Locke worded the question like this: "How do I know that God is the revealer of this to me; that this impression is made upon my mind by his Holy Spirit and that therefore I ought to obey it?" (4.19.10)[26] He thought that in order to test the legitimacy of a revelation, "reason must be our last judge and guide in everything," including this question (4.19.14).

---

[25]Since this is such an important philosophical issue, many books on Philosophy of Religion will contain sections dealing with verification. See William I. Rowe and William J. Wainwright, eds., Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973; John Hick, Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 2nd ed., et al.

[26]Not only that, but Locke wonders how he would know whether it might be a revelation from Satan (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding 4.19.13).

Locke gives several criteria for identifying a genuine revelation. One criterion is that a genuine revelation would not be "contradictory to our clear intuitive knowledge" (4.18.5). That is, the revelation should not contain something immediately repugnant to reason. For example, if someone were to say that God had told her that she both exists and does not exist at the same time and in the same way, this would violate the law of non-contradiction and does not seem to be either intelligible or worthy of an omniscient being. The Old Testament preachers may have employed a procedure similar to this.

**Personal Religious Experience and Verification**

In contrast to Locke and those who think that revelation must stand up to some kind of logical analysis, others believe that a person intuitively apprehends the "rightness" of a genuine revelation, and this is the only confirmation that is necessary. They sometimes describe this inner authentication as an intimately personal religious experience, or a spiritual perception of the inner logic of the revelation that just "clicks" inside them and "gels" with their personal needs. When Niebuhr discusses revelatory moments[27] (although he does not clearly apply this to the Bible), he thinks there is a "self-evidencing content of revelation" which is the believer's "*cogito, ergo sum*," except (unlike the Cartesian stance) it is discovered in the passive as, "I am being thought, therefore I am" and "I am being believed in, therefore I believe."[28] These believers say that when revelatory events occur in their lives, they immediately recognize them. There is no need to resort to either extra-mental or logical criteria for verification. Revelatory experiences are self-authenticating, according to this view.

This approach may sometimes lead to accepting an entire religious system rather than simply to accepting individual, self-contained revelations. Mohammed was

---

[27]Niebuhr 91.
[28]Niebuhr 103.

a prophet who basically says, "Take my word for it. I really did receive revelations." His revelations were not received in public, they were not attested by witnessed miracles, and he apparently did not prophesy coming events, the fulfillment of which could have added a veridical element to his revelations. Without such veridical elements, how could a person go about checking to see whether Mohammed actually received these revelations from God? How could someone distinguish Mohammed's revelations from a false prophet's revelations? The same questions could be asked of the holy books in the Judeo-Christian, Hindu, and other revelation claims.

Of course, some think that religion is not about absolute Truth but is about finding a story that fits their own inner experience, their own personal and private truth, as illustrated by Shirley MacLaine's books. If this is accurate, then whether a revelation is objectively, rationally, and intersubjectively testable is not so important after all. Perhaps a movie star learns some Buddhist teachings, and they make sense to her. She begins to study Buddhism more intently. She connects with it in a way that she feels is even deeper and truer than logical conclusions. She accepts Buddhist teachings because she identifies their validity for her own life, not because of some external or rational testing apparatus. That seems superfluous to her because she has located a body of information that hits home. As Coleridge says,

> In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit.[29]

Maybe someone could do the same with other books, that is, have a personal verification of the revelation, which might or might not entail a religious experience of some kind. Perhaps someone proclaims a revelation and responsive individuals say, "That sounds right to me," or they read a book and proclaim, "The Holy Spirit has

---

[29]Wilbur Fisk Tillett, The Paths That Lead To God (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1926):321.

revealed to me that I have found his true word." Of course, that only moves the questions back another step, because how do people know for sure that it was really the Holy Spirit that gave someone an idea? Is that truly validation?

If the inner subjective test of revelation is the best that can be done, this seems a rather slippery way to test something that is already pretty ephemeral. After all, people can speak what many take to be deep and profound truths without the assistance of revelation. Is it not on this basis that people have followed Jim Jones, David Koresh, Kim Miller, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Marshall Applewhite, and a host of other self-proclaimed prophets? Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, numerous Charismatics, televangelists, shamen, houngans, witch doctors, psychics, and countless others have claimed and continue to claim revelations from God. Yet, many of their messages seem superfluous, repetitive, contradictory, purely emotive, speculative, ambiguous, incoherent, and at times patently false.

The sincerity and extent of the followers' commitments cannot be questioned, but the revelations that ring true for them do not ring true for a lot of people. Here again, the power of presuppositions becomes clear. Perhaps this is because, in Rem Edwards' words, "it is a preconception about what is real and what is unreal that tells us what experiences to trust."[30] A person's presuppositions can in large measure "set her up" for what she expects, finds, or fails to find. If a hearer expects to have a certain kind of feeling and then, when it occurs, interprets it as the Holy Spirit contacting her, she might hear a proclamation and simply impose a religious significance onto something that otherwise would not and should not have it. Hearing or reading a statement and rationally recognizing that it is logical and meaningful are not

---

[30]Rem Edwards, Reason and Religion: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972):297.

the same as having an inner religious experience that verifies the statement as genuine revelation from God.

This presents John Hick's question,

> If it is God's intention to confront men with God's presence, as personal will and purpose, why has this not been done in an unambiguous manner, by some overwhelming manifestation of divine power and glory?[31]

**Fideism and Verification**

Approaches to revelation discussed thus far are very precarious. Is there no better way to verify the claims of revelation? What if a revelation contradicts itself? Can contradictory statements contained in a single revelation both be correct? Reason answers, "No." But, some theologians think that reason is out of place in matters of revelation and religion. They aver that seeking security in reasons and facts is a weakness when it comes to religion. Tertullian, Luther, Calvin, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Barth, and others seem to lean in this direction.

This seems almost like a child's game of pretend, i.e., playing like something is the case even when there is no "reason" to think so. Locke comments that Tertullian's famous statement that his faith in Christianity was related to its absurdity, "might, in a good man, pass for a sally of zeal, but would prove a very ill rule for men to choose their opinions or religion by." (4.18.11)[32] Yet, eminent scholars like Rudolf Bultmann hold this position. He says,

> de-mythologizing is the radical application of the doctrine of justification by faith to the sphere of knowledge and thoughts. Like the doctrine of justification, de-mythologizing destroys every longing for security . . . The man who desires to believe in God must know that he has nothing at his own disposal on which to build this faith, that he is, so to speak, in a vacuum. He who abandons every form of security shall find the true security.[33]

---

[31]John Hick, Philosophy of Religion 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983):68-69.

[32]Niebuhr thinks that Tertullian's statement is oft misused. See H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951):77.

[33]Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953):84.

This is a troubling notion for those who seek evidence for their beliefs, and for those who are still wondering who is right. Doubting Thomas asked for evidence and received it without criticism, and many want some kind of compelling, or at least reasonable, factor to undergird their beliefs.[34] Anything else appears to be sporadic behavior. Fideists, (those who accept a view by sheer faith, without proof, or in some cases in spite of evidence to the contrary), cannot even offer a good reason to be fideists, lest they disprove their view. Another troubling aspect of this position is that Bultmann is one of the greatest innovators in biblical studies, but on what is the entire edifice of his system based? Where did he get the belief that no evidence is necessary when it comes to religious matters? One thing he does to justify his beliefs is quote New Testament Scripture.[35] How does he know that these texts are authoritative and thus deserve quoting as proof of his view? The proofs are not objective and are not testable. In fideistic fashion, they are built on faith in something, but what and why? Considering the impact his ideas have had on the religious world, these matters should be discussed more pointedly than is possible here. Nevertheless, since Bultmann's thoughts have been so influential, more will be said about some of his views on another topic shortly.[36]

Bultmann's position seems particularly strange since he concludes that the mythical sections of the Bible are mythical largely because they clash with modernity,[37] especially with natural science. But if myths clash with modernity and the scientific age, what of his fideism? Is trusting in something so ephemeral as the

---

[34]John 20:26-29

[35]Bultmann 76-82, for example.

[36]As is true for anyone, Bultmann was influenced by many and was somewhat a product of his time. For example, David F. Strauss was using the term myth to refer the later church's beliefs about Jesus rather than historical facts before his book was published in German in 1835. Thus, when Bultmann arrived on the scene, the distinction between matters of faith and matters of historical fact had been around for some time. Bultmann put his own twist on it and was a great popularizer of this view. See Strauss' The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined, trans. Marian Evans (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855).

[37]Bultmann 14-17, for example.

absent undergirdings of fideism not every bit as repugnant to modernity? One of the problematic aspects of those who hold neo-orthodox related views like Bultmann, Niebuhr, and others is what seems to be the rejection of propositional revelation. If revelation is not written, but experienced (notice the existential influence here), then how else *could* it be verified?

If revelation can only be verified by an internal test, this method does not seem sufficient to establish whether something is objectively true. Both defining and/or identifying a genuine "inner experience" of this kind are difficult, particularly for people who claim never to have had one. Even if these problems can be resolved, and if self-authenticating experiences prove something to the individual experiencing the inner verification, this certainly would have no apologetic value.[38]

Antony Flew's charges may apply to this approach. He says,

> sophisticated religious people -- or so it seemed to me . . . tend to refuse to allow, not merely that anything actually does occur, but that anything conceivably could occur, which would count against their theological assertions and explanations. But in so far as they do this their supposed explanations are actually bogus, and their seeming assertions are really vacuous.[39]

Anyone who accepts contradictory statements as true has apparently abandoned reason, but those who regard deep inner experiences as more legitimate than rational argument subject themselves to Flew's criticisms. It sounds like they are saying, "I do not care what you say; I know what I felt in my heart, and I can never deny it."

There is also a consistency problem here. The inner verification approach almost necessitates two revelations: the initial one, then another revelation that the

---

[38]Consider the chapter "Religious Experience: What Does It Mean to Encounter the Divine?" in Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger, Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991):13-31.

[39]Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification" New Essays in Philosophical Theology Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, eds. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1955):106.

first revelation is truly a revelation. Why not cut out the middle man and send the veridical revelation directly to each individual as needed? If this inner criterion of truth were applied to other areas of life, how chaotic (albeit politically correct) would the world be? With much of the religious world functioning on so subjective a basis for verification, the large number of religious groups evident in Christendom today seems inevitable. Should revelation and religion be so personal that they become radically individuated, with no objectively testable/checkable qualities? This model seems too subjective to be helpful. But there is more to be said about the value of objective versus subjective information in this context.

**Accuracy and Verification**

Old Testament texts say that God repeatedly condemned prophets who spoke falsehoods in his name. He had not sent them. Since God forbade the Israelites from giving them an ear,[40] how did he expect the people to distinguish between genuine and false prophets? Deuteronomy 18:22 sets forth one criterion: the accuracy of prophecies. If the prophet's prediction was fulfilled, that was a sign of a true prophet.[41]

The Bible attributes with two major qualities to the ordained prophet: (1) presenting the right message, and (2) accurately foretelling the future. But even a false prophet might make an accurate prediction on occasion. After all, a broken clock is correct twice each day. So, what happened when a fake prophet came along whose foretelling somehow came to pass? Deuteronomy 13:1-3 tells of such a case. It says that if a prophet's words came to pass, and he also said something that patently contradicted the core principles of the Jewish religion, he was a false prophet. The text specifically says that if a prophet's signs come to pass and he tells the people to

---

[40]For example, see Jeremiah 14:14.
[41]See Isaiah 42:21-24.

worship other gods, do not listen to him. He is violating the first of the ten commandments, to worship no other God but Jehovah.

Another question related to the test of accurate prophecies is whether God might have a prophet say something, then God could change his mind about it, leaving the prophet labeled as a false prophet. Is this not what happened in the case of Jonah? Jonah prophesied that Nineveh would perish in forty days. Yet, when the people of Nineveh humbly repented of their evil ways, God forgave them and did not destroy Nineveh. No one knows whether the one sentence was the entirety of what Jonah said. If he said more than the one recorded sentence, he may have explicitly included the option of repentence. Otherwise, it is possible, of course, that a stranger to the community arrived, said one sentence, and the king and his people cowered in fear. On the other hand, there could have been more to it than that.

But even if Jonah's message was only one sentence, everyone involved in the situation evidently understood that Jonah's prophecy involved a contingency, viz., God forgives the penitent. Homer Hailey comments on Jonah's message, "Warnings of this nature are conditional; this should be understood."[42] This principle was explicitly stated in Jeremiah's prophecy.

> At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them (18:7-8).

Based on their behavior, the story assumes that the Ninevites knew this.

Further, Jonah was angry when the city was not destroyed.

> And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil (3:2).

---

[42]Homer Hailey, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972):75.

Thus, Jonah was also familiar with God's forgiving nature and understood that the Ninevites' repentence would bring forgiveness. Therefore, this does not seem to be a good example of God reneging and putting a prophet in jeopardy.

Since the accuracy test involved the future, in many instances (depending on the lapse time required) it took hearers a while to compare a prophecy with its fulfillment or lack thereof. When some of the prophets said that Judah was about to be destroyed and others said that peace would reign, the former were proven to be accurate and the latter were proven wrong when war came. The accuracy test is used to distinguish good stock traders from bad and good weather forecasters from bad. It disproves alleged psychics, fortunetellers, and end of the world proclaimers.[43] The inaccuracies and counterexamples prove them false.

In a somewhat similar fashion, Niebuhr emphasizes the importance of a revelation's *product* (fruits) as a test of genuineness. This is not exactly an accuracy test, but the emphasis is also on the outcome. That is, when a person lives according to principles learned through revelation, good things happen in and through their lives. Niebuhr refers to this as a legitimate revelation's "success at clarifying and reconstructing souls."[44] Like many others, he emphasizes Jesus' idea that "By their fruits you shall know them."[45] At least there is a bit of objectivity to tests of accuracy and outcome since they involve extramental events, empirical facts, and/or a person's behavior, which things can be observed.

Nonetheless, the bulk of the Old Testament prophet's work was not in foretelling the distant future. For the most part, it was about the present and past sins of Israel, viz., injustice, mistreatment of the weak, idolatry, etc. But those accusations

---

[43]See John F. MacArthur, Jr. Charismatic Chaos (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.) for many quotations of recent claims of revelations.

[44]Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation 98.

[45]Matthew 7:15-29

did not require a lot of verification, since the Israelites had firsthand knowledge of these behaviors.

The prophet's revelation could be tested in comparison to previous revelations. Israelites held the Mosaic law to be the standard of religious truth. It was their authority for judging the legitimacy of subsequent revelations.[46] Many think that the Bible is such a standard today. A sizable group of these people believe that the Bible is the "gold standard" for what is and is not genuine revelation. Many also believe that God reveals his will to people on a daily basis; so, they welcome modern day revelations, but only so long as the revelations agree with what they believe the Bible already teaches.

**Miracles and Verification**

Locke points out that the Old Testament preachers were not left solely with their own internal lights to decide whether they had received a genuine revelation because God subsequently confirmed his message to the prophets and others by means of "outward signs" to accompany and attest to the revelations. For example, Gideon was not sure what he was experiencing. Was actually God talking to him? He asked for and received two unusual signs before he was thoroughly convinced that he had received a divine revelation.[47]

In this instance, although the revelation was genuine, it was not self-authenticating. Locke also points out that revelations of prophets and apostles of old were often *publicly* verified by the manifestation of "outward signs to convince [us] of the Author of those revelations" (4.19.15). Thus, if people questioned the veracity of the Old Testament prophets' claims, the prophets were able to convince them with

---

[46]This practice continued into New Testament times. Paul even applied it to himself. If he later said something that contradicted his former remarks, the people were counseled to reject him (Acts 17:11; Galatians 1:6-9). More on this shortly.

[47]Judges 6:36ff.

public miraculous events and fulfilled prophecies, rather than a simple "take my word for it on this." At times direct confrontations with the false prophets made it abundantly clear which prophets were genuine and which were not.[48] Although John the Baptist was a different case, he associated himself with the fulfillment of prophecy (a sign in itself), he did no miraculous signs;[49] Jesus himself paid him the highest vote of confidence, thereby further authorizing his work.[50]

The New Testament also ties miracles to the verification of revelation, as though the outward signs had a great deal to do with confirming the truthfulness of the message.[51] Locke thought the argument from signs could be used to vouch for Jesus' ministry and message (including his fulfillment of Messianic prophecies). These miraculous works comprised a type of credentials. After all, there were "false Christs" before and after Jesus,[52] but their claims do not seem to have been vouchsafed by genuinely supernatural signs, much less by substantial eyewitness accounts, historical argumentation, or by their resurrection from the dead.[53]

However, given the fact that some pseudoprophets could work apparent wonders as well (cf. the Egyptian magicians' reproductions of some of Moses' signs, e.g., Exodus 7:11-12), it seems

---

[48]This was the situation with Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

[49]John 10:41

[50]Matthew 11:11

[51]Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3; Hebrews 2:3-4

[52]Consider the late second century account of Simon's claim that if he were buried alive, he would rise the third day. He failed to do so, "for he was not the Christ." Hippolytus The Refutation of All Heresies Chapter 16.

[53]Compare with stories of Apollonius which have certain parallels with the story of Jesus. Philostratus The Life of Apollonius of Tyana 2 volumes F. C. Conybeare Loeb Classical Library. See also D. L. Tiede, The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker (Missoula, Montana: 1972); Morton Smith, "Prolegomenon to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels, and Jesus" Journal of Biblical Literature 90 (1971):174-99; H. F. Harris, "Apollonius of Tyana: Fact and Fiction" Journal of Religious History S:189-99, June 1969; and Charles Bigg, The Origins of Christianity T. B. Strong, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909): 306-311.

> that however great the importance attached to signs and wonders, they were not to be regarded among the Israelites, either as the highest test, or as absolutely decisive . . . .[54]

The identification of the Israelites' God had involved a process of many miracles produced over a period of generations among several nations. Thus, when a prophet came along saying, "Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them,"[55] he should not be trusted even if he appeared to be able to produce wonders. There were fake, false signs[56] and there were real, actual ones as performed in connection with Jehovah. Whether the Egyptian magicians performed supernatural acts or very clever tricks is unknown. There are several ways that it could have been done. The point was that the serpents produced by Jehovah's power devoured those produced by the magicians.

Today there continue to be claims of supernatural events from televangelists, psychics, and many others. Once a person sufficiently defines what a miracle is, she could separate supernatural acts of power from magicians' tricks, natural phenomena, and psychosomatic ailments.[57] This is not always easy to do. Many, including several popular magicians, have successfully dealt with these questions at great length.[58]

Thus, distinguishing the genuinely hypernormal events from merely unusual acts performed by talented people is not limited to religious pursuits. Consider the efforts of "psychic debunkers" today like James Randi who defy alleged psychics to

---

[54]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976 reprint ed.):363.

[55]Deuteronomy 13:2

[56]2 Thessalonians 2:9

[57]Such a study is medical doctor William A Nolen's Healing: A Doctor In Search of a Miracle (New York: Random House, 1974) where Nolen tracks down claims of healing, only too often finding tragic stories of pain and deception.

[58]For example, see the books by three world class magicians - Dan Korem, Powers: Testing the Psychic and Supernatural (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988; Andre Kole with Al Janssen, Miracles or Magic? (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1987); and James Randi, The Faith Healers (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1987). See also footnote 123.

perform a psychic event under controlled conditions. He has a standing offer of one million dollars for anyone who can do so. In order to make such offers, he must carefully define the boundaries of what a psychic event is.[59] An interesting philosophical question is about what would happen if a psychic performed a genuine psychic event in Randi's presence one day. Would his presuppositions forbid him from admitting it like the Pharisees who saw Jesus' miracles did, or is there an event such that even an unbeliever could be convinced?[60]

This is a particularly interesting question in light of the present discussion. Would genuine miracles have any veridical value at all if they could not be distinguished from fake ones? If there were no such distinction, apparently everyone who claimed to perform miracles (even though in actuality they performed only tricks) would have as much compelling evidence for their views (even if they were false views) as an apostle of Christ would have even though he spoke the truth and performed supernatural events. But claims must be separated on the basis of evidence. Miracle claims must be investigated beyond the mere claims. However, even if this can be done successfully, the power of an investigator's presuppositions will be immense.

**The Verifiability of "Transcendent" Information Contained In A Revelation**

Those who conclude that a particular revelation is from God might confront information in it which they cannot empirically confirm. They should not be surprised that God might send a message that includes information which transcends a human being's capacity to confirm directly and immediately. Still, having tested the revelation in other ways and concluding that it is genuine, the revelation's claim of authority would be established. More is said on this in the section on bridging the gap.

---

[59]See Randi's book Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns and other Delusions (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1982).

[60]More on this in this chapter's section "Sometimes Religious Truth is the Best Explanation of Facts."

It seems reasonable that either documents or persons could be tested repeatedly until their trustworthiness is confirmed. This does not rule out further testing, especially when statements are made that do not seem to fit the apparent facts; but times will inevitably come when revelations will say things that are beyond the trusting person's ability to discover first hand.

If a business woman wants to hire an employee, she might establish a set of criteria whereby she could locate a trustworthy person. She locates someone who passes the criteria and she hires him. Then she continues to watch him for a sufficient period of time. The business woman would eventually be justified in trusting the new employee with secrets and further would be justified in believing the employee when he relayed information to which she did not have direct access. In other words, after he has passed the test, his character "takes over."

Similarly, some of the revelations to which the Bible attests were about topics that did not always clearly and/or immediately align with reason, and were not always directly accessible by reason (e.g., the dead will rise again on the last day). But since it is *attested* revelation, Locke says, that attestation "must carry it against the probable conjectures of reason." (4.18.8)[61]

Another problem that theologians face on this issue is the continuity of revelation. That is, has God ceased revealing his message to humanity in the direct, immediate, overt way that the Bible says he spoke to Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and Peter, or does this process continue into the twenty-first century? Within their own camps, conservatives and liberals are divided on this. But once again, even conservatives who think that God talks to them regularly (as many charismatics claim)

[61]If the outward signs were done publicly, then they were evidential for the hearer as well as the speaker.

say that if the message they receive does not align with the Bible, then it is false.[62] Others claim that if the alleged revelations are just what the Bible teaches anyway, why are they necessary? Just read the Bible. In any event, it goes back to the problem of subjectivity.

Would God reveal something new and different today? He certainly did this from time to time in biblical history. The Mosaic Law was new at one time. Christianity was new at one time. But those changes had a history of being foretold and all fit together in the big picture.[63] The Bible pictures Christianity, however, as the "last days," the final stage in the developing picture.[64] That itself may have brought closure to the need for constant revelations. This point of view makes the biblical information about animal *telos* crucial, because it makes the Bible the seminal repository of divine insights into the matter.

Some non-traditionalists, however, think that revelations continue to arrive, bringing further enlightenment about this or other issues. One of the problems with this view which conservatives point, is (again) the question of verifying whether alleged revelations are truly revelations from God rather than merely a logical inference which someone has reached due to their own human abilities, the influence of current discussions or *zeitgeist* (which could be either positive or negative without being revelatory), a psychological event, or a number of other possibilities.

In the Bible there seems to have been a lengthy period (perhaps more than once) when there was no word from God.[65] Some say that the Bible itself teaches that

---

[62]Some use a passage like Galatians 1:6-9 where Paul says that if he or an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.

[63]Several texts like Galatians 3, Ephesians 3, and Hebrews 8 make these claims.

[64]Isaiah 2:1-4; Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:1-3

[65]Consider 1 Samuel 3:1 and the four hundred years between the testaments.

*permanent* silent period in that sense would come and that miracles and revelations would eventually cease.[66]

Having examined some of the presuppositions connected with theism and the verifiability of revelation, this chapter's focus has now narrowed to the category of people who agree on the basic ideas that only one actual God exists, that this God has sent a revelation to humanity which can be verified insofar as such a thing could be subjected to empirical and logical examination, and that the message is in book form (viz., the Bible).

## THE QUESTION OF WHAT THE BIBLE IS

Since much of the landscape of the revelation questions has been covered (definition, mode, verification), for the purposes of this paper the focus can narrow to some of the philosophical differences between those who would accept the Bible as authoritative revelation from God. Many liberal, neo-orthodox, and conservative believers agree that the Bible is authoritative. But they often disagree on the more detailed questions like the meaning of authoritative, the specific way in which the Bible is authoritative, what the Bible is supposed to be, what purpose God intended for it to serve, and others.

Picture a spectrum of beliefs about biblical inspiration with the left extreme labeled "All man, no God" and the right extreme labeled "All God, no man." The liberal view would be located in the direction of the left side, the conservative in the direction of the right side, and neo-orthodox somewhere around the middle. That means that the fundamental tenets of liberal theology picture the Bible as more the work of human beings than God. The fundamental tenets of conservatism picture the Bible as more the work of God than human beings. The fundamental tenets of neo-orthodoxy pictures the Bible as the product of a more equal participation of the two.

---

[66]For example, 1 Corinthians 13:8.

**Traditional View**

This paper advocates the traditional view of the Bible (also commonly known as the high view of Scripture and the conservative view of inspiration). The traditional way of looking at the Bible is generally ". . . the Book *par excellence*, the recognized record of divine revelation."[67] More specifically, this view says that what the Bible presents as historical narratives are so in fact and occurred in space-time history in the places, at the times, and to the people it specifies. The traditional view usually includes corollaries like Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Pauline authorship of several New Testament epistles, and early dates for most of the New Testament books.

One of the questions that separates believers is the question of inspiration. What does it mean to say that the Bible is inspired? The "dictation" theory of inspiration avers that the writers were like dictation machines, computer printers. They wrote exactly what they were "told" by the Holy Spirit and had no leeway for their own vocabulary, ideas, and emotions. The "dynamic" theory of inspiration says that the Holy Spirit gave the writers a general idea to write about and then left them to their own devices to work out the details. The basic ideas are from God, but there is significant leeway in the process for human beings to provide filler material and present the ideas in their own ways. The "plenary, verbal" theory of inspiration says that the Holy Spirit supervised the writers very closely so that when each work was completed it was exactly the way God wanted it, although room was allowed for them to inject their own personalities, vocabularies, and emotions.

Thus, some think that the Bible is a mixture of authority between some of God's word and a lot of human words, not all of which are true. Some call this the

---

[67]R. H. Mounce, "Bible," Evangelical Dictionary of Theology Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984):136.

liberal view of inspiration although there may be several subcategories under this general rubric. Some think that the Bible is not a divinely directed set of propositions but is a vehicle, an instrument, a meeting point for a personal encounter with God. Whether this position is true or false is not ultimately a big issue to them. Some call this the neo-orthodox view of inspiration, but this basic view also has subcategories.[68] Some think that all of the Bible is God's word, and that even the parts supplied by the writers themselves were carefully supervised in order to ensure truthfulness and accuracy. This is the conservative view, and has its own subcategories.

One working definition of the traditional view of inspiration is,

> that mysterious process by which the divine causality worked through the human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles, to produce divinely authoritative writings.[69]

Thus, this view holds that the writers wrote under God's influence (although this work is generally attributed to the Holy Spirit) to the extent that they could not have produced these works with human ability alone. When necessary, God miraculously informed the writers of what he wanted said and guided them to address properly the topics he wanted addressed. The Holy Spirit supervised the process in a way that excluded error. Philosophically, the autonomy of each writer is respected, but the intervention of the Holy Spirit is allowed.

That is, they aver that Bible writers were inspired in a way that no other writers have been inspired. Although it seems clear that some of the writers accessed their own emotions, vocabularies, knowledge, experiences, and knowledge of secular writings, they believed that God was guiding their message so that the result was "the word of God," rather than simply their own ideas. The process of inspiration as the

---

[68]Norman Geisler and William Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968):37-47.

[69]Geisler and Nix 29.

Bible describes it involved human beings, but because God was "running the show," the product was more than human.

It should be noted that the traditional view of Scripture is traditional (i.e., it has a long history) for a good reason. It is what the Bible claims for itself. In hundreds, some say thousands, of cases Old Testament texts claim to be speaking God's words.[70] The prophets repeatedly claim God's inspiration with phrases equivalent to "thus saith Jehovah."

Someone might deny that Jesus and others in the New Testament held such a high view of the Old Testament because at times they appear to disagree with some of the Old Testament law. However, one must take into consideration the two major religious transitions in the Bible, viz., when the Mosaic law was given to the Jews, and when Christianity began.

For 1,500 years the Mosaic law had been in force. But as the Old Testament prophets had said, a harbinger would come, the Messiah would come, and a new age would begin. The New Testament presents John the Baptist as the harbinger, Jesus as the Messiah, and Christianity as the new age. Jesus lived and died as a faithful Jew, but being the focal point of a transitional period in religion, Jesus arrived on the scene preaching change. The New Testament says that his death effectively ended the period of the Mosaic law,[71] instituted a new law,[72] and thereby made Jews and Gentiles into one group of Christian people.[73]

Looking at their statements from this perspective, Jesus, Paul, and Peter never questioned the inspiration or accuracy of the Old Testament. Rather, they employed the Old Testament to prove that what it had said would occur, did in fact come to

---

[70]For a list of several hundred of these, see A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963):81-84.

[71]Colossians 2:14

[72]Romans 3:21-22, 28; 7:6; Galatians 3:15-29; Hebrews 8:1-13, et al.

[73]Ephesians 2:14-16; Galatians 3:26-28

pass.[74] Jesus, Paul, and Peter were not manifesting unbelief in the Old Testament. Rather, they were saying that they *did* believe it and could see its teachings coming to pass in their time.

The Bible has Jesus saying[75] that God was the true author of Old Testament texts which he quoted.[76] His statements about the Old Testament writings are considered a high view of Scripture because he says things like "Scripture cannot be broken"[77] and "not a jot or a tittle will pass from the law until all is accomplished."[78] He also makes references to detailed circumstances in which Old Testament texts are being fulfilled literally.[79] He is famous for upbraiding the Pharisees with statements like, "Have you not read?" and "It is written . . ." as though what the Old Testament texts said was authoritative and final. He responded to Satan's temptations with Old Testament quotes. He even made an argument based on the tense of one word as though even individual words of the Old Testament had significance.[80]

Someone might object to this view since Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Ye have heard that it was said . . . " and then "But I say unto you . . ." which some interpret to mean that he was correcting the Old Testament. Some conservative commentators take this view and others disagree. But Jesus prefaces his comments with statements of respect for the law. He adds that not the smallest bit of it shall pass away until all is fulfilled. Then he makes an important point which is at the heart of the rest of the sermon, i.e., his followers' righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. The next verse is where he begins the "you have heard . . . but I

---

[74]1 Peter 1:10-12. Peter's writings contain many Old Testament references and quotes.

[75]Of course, as will be discussed shortly, there is the question of which/how many statements Jesus actually made and which were later supplied by the early church, copyists, redactors, storytellers, and others. For example, see Robert W. Funk, ed., and The Jesus Seminar, The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

[76]Matthew 15:4; 22:31-32; Mark 12:36; 13:24-27, et al.

[77]John 10:35

[78]Matthew 5:17-19

[79]Matthew 26:31, 54; Mark 9:12-13; Luke 4:14-40; 24:44-47; John 13:18

[80]Matthew 22:31-32

say unto you" sections. Notice that he does not say what one might expect. He does not say, "It is written." Each time he broaches another topic in this section, he rather says, "you have heard that it was said." Some commentators understand this to mean that it was said by the Rabbi's and other scribal commentators.

Thus, as some writers note, it was not the written law that Jesus was correcting, but the reductionistic way in which certain Jewish leaders and others so often manipulated the law so that it would require only minimal commitment on their part.[81] It was the shallow, heartless, letter of the law type of obedience that he addressed. He tried to tell the people that the law was not given simply to guide a person's exterior behavior. It was supposed to be about the condition of one's heart. It was supposed to be about loving and serving God and loving one's neighbor as oneself, not about doing the bare minimum.

For example, they had heard that murdering someone was wrong and that a murderer would be judged. The judgment comment was not actually in the ten commandments, but it was part of what the people had been taught.[82] But Jesus transcends what they had heard and goes to the heart of the law. It is not simply that murder is wrong, but the condition of heart which fosters murder is wrong.

When Jesus deals with their practice of divorce (Matthew 5:31-32) he was responding to the legalistic fervor for getting all of the paperwork done properly, while flippantly handling matters like temptation, lust, and love. For example, the Mishnah quotes the School of Hillel as saying, "He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish for him" and Rabbi Akiba as saying that a man could divorce, "Even if he found another fairer than she . . . ."[83] Jesus goes to the heart of the matter and tells them that

---

[81]See R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943):216-217; A. Lukyn Williams, "St. Matthew" in The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950):159.

[82]Matthew 5:21-48

[83]Gittin 9.10

this is not what the Law was talking about. The Law should have induced care and concern for others rather than heartless legalism.

So, it is not just a matter of keeping oneself out of another woman's bed, it is about not lusting after a non-spouse.[84] Jesus' approach in this context is similar to many of the Old Testament prophets pleading with the people not just to sacrifice blind and damaged animals to God. They should sacrifice selfishness. Later in Matthew's account, Jesus addresses a similar theme of hair splitting, shallow religion versus a genuine, deeply dedicated motivation for one's religious life.[85] Thus, in the sermon on the mount and elsewhere, Jesus exalts the Mosaic law, quotes it, views it as authoritative,[86] and does not refute its value, although he will be updating and eventually replacing a great deal of it in fulfillment of a messianic prophecy.[87]

There are at least two hundred ninety-five New Testament quotations or direct references to the Old Testament and about six hundred thirteen allusions to it, totaling "about 10 percent of the New Testament text."[88] This is impressive for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the people seemed to believe that the Old Testament words were authoritative in such a way that they used a proof text approach to confirm the legitimacy of what they said. That is how most of the New Testament uses of Old Testament texts occur.

---

[84]Matthew 5:27-32

[85]Matthew 22:16-22

[86]Jesus says to treat others as you would have them treat you, "for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

[87]There is disagreement about whether Jesus is addressing the law per se, or the abuses of the law. There are many scholars who think that Jesus is here transcending the Mosaic law, which is part of Jesus' mission. Many of these scholars are evangelicals who do not believe that Jesus was saying the Law was no good, but that he was turning people's attention to the deeper, more spiritual mode of thinking. This dissertation has no problem with that view. Perhaps Jesus was saying something about both the Law and its corruption.

[88]Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969):97.

The New Testament writings also say that God was speaking through both the Old and New Testament writers and speakers in many texts.[89] Thus, Paul's epistles were being read and collected as authoritative documents very early. Misquoting his writings was like misquoting the other Scriptures and was just as self-destructive.[90] Therefore, canonization of the New Testament books was not something that occurred at a council in the fourth century. It had been going on for a long time on a grassroots level. Early Christians were quoting those books and using proof texts from the earliest times.[91] They occasionally quote other writings (poets, philosophers), but only as insights and not as divinely authoritative documents. These biblical quotes from both early non-believers and early Christian writings prove the antiquity of the high view of Scripture.[92]

As far as canonization of the Old Testament goes, "Contrary to prevailing critical opinion, there existed, prior to the Exile, a large body of sacred literature."[93] Aligned with this, the conservative maintains that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in the "books of the covenant"[94] and this was read to the Israelites upon their entrance into the Promised Land.[95] Joshua's farewell address was written "in the book of the law of God."[96] Samuel spoke concerning the manner of the kingdom and "wrote it in a book."[97] After the Israelites had neglected God for a long time, a priest named Hilkiah found the book of the law in the temple and King Josiah commanded that the

---

[89]For example, see Acts 1:16; 4:25; 28:25; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Galatians 1:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

[90]2 Peter 3:15-17

[91]For example, see "The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians" and similar letters in which the writers make reference after reference and use quote after quote from New Testament gospels and epistles as early as late first century and early second century.

[92]See Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix 99-112.

[93]Mounce 136.

[94]Exodus 21-13; 24:4, 7

[95]Joshua 8:35

[96]Joshua 24:26

[97]I Samuel 10:25

people begin to learn it once again.[98] These texts further the idea that some of the Old Testament literature was produced very early and was considered to be from God.

Bible characters sometimes treat the Old Testament as a single, harmonious unit. For instance, when the Devil quoted an Old Testament passage ("It is written . . . ") as authority for Jesus to jump off the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus used another Old Testament passage which enlightened the meaning of the first one ("Again it is written . . .")[99] as though both were part of one unit, one contiguous body of consistent thought, harmonious throughout.

New Testament writers and speakers also manifested a belief in the integrity and unity of the Old Testament when they used it in a holistic way as when the apostle Paul and the writer of the book of Hebrews quote a variety of Old Testament passages from different books texts to prove the points they were addressing.[100] Based on what the Bible says about itself and based on how the New Testament talks about and uses the Old Testament texts, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Bible itself teaches something very close to a high view of Scripture.[101] These are just a few of the times that the ancient writings are referred to in the writings themselves. Therefore, the Old Testament canon was similar to the later situation with the New Testament,

> This revelatory literature, although not reaching a fixed form until late in the second century B. C., was nevertheless regarded from the very first as the revealed will of God and therefore binding upon the people.[102]

---

[98]2 Kings 22:8

[99]Matthew 4:5-7

[100]Romans 9-11; Hebrews 1-4

[101]Consider Brian S. Rosner, "'Written for Us': Paul's View of Scripture," A Pathway into the Holy Scripture Philip Satterthwaite and David Wright, eds. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994):81-105. There are also a number of excellent responses to recent trends in how to think about Scripture as another article in A Pathway . . . where Kevin Vanhoozer addresses Karl Barth's "indirect identity" and James Barr's "non-identity" views in "God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today" 143-181.

[102]Mounce 136.

Notice that this is not the old circumlocution that the Bible must be a revelation from God because it says so. As Barr correctly notes, "how do we know that what the Bible teaches about inspiration is true?"[103] If some of the liberal theologians are correct, the aforementioned quotes could be myths, not history. Either way, just because a book claims to be something does not make it so. The point of these citations is only that the high view of Scripture is an ancient view,[104] a biblical view, and not something from the modern era, which some claim originated with certain "fundamentalist" Presbyterians like Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield at Princeton between about 1880 and 1920.[105] In reality, it is the critical methodology (to be addressed shortly) that is new, arising as recently as the nineteenth century.

Should the biblical claims for inspiration be taken seriously? To someone from the traditional perspective, it seems odd to say that the Bible is inspired and authoritative, yet reject it when it describes itself in such high terms.[106] Maybe the traditional view of inspiration does not make sense to some people. However, whether a person can understand the mechanics of this process of inspiration, which the Bible writers describe, should not preclude the possibility (1) that it actually happened, and (2) accepting the product without understanding the process. The Bible itself does not detail exactly how the human mind was influenced in the process of inspiration, or precisely how they recognized that God was the author of it. If someone affirms that God exists and has acted in human history, it seems inevitable

---

[103]Barr Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978):264.

[104]See also, John D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

[105]Examples of this view can be found in: Barr, Fundamentalism 261ff.; and in Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

[106]This is true of the numerous claims by speakers and writers in both Testaments that their messages are from God, New Testament references to Old Testament inspiration, and New Testament references to people like Paul as having written authoritative literature (2 Peter 3:15-16).

that God would eventually do some things that finite minds would have trouble comprehending.

This view of inspiration has a certain impact on the way a person thinks about what the biblical texts relevant to animal *telos* say. Namely, it appears that if someone accepts the traditional view of Scripture, then whatever the Bible approves regarding animal *telos* is actually God's will. At least, conservatives think this constitutes a strong *prima facie* case for coming to understand the written will of God.

For example, when Proverbs 12:10 says, "A righteous man regards the life of his beast," the conservative who holds the traditional view of Scripture does not think of that statement as merely the opinion of someone who lived in Palestine one or two thousand years ago. Conservatives apply certain hermeneutical principles to the remote and immediate contexts, decide that it is indeed an inspired, divine statement, and conclude that it is God's very will that regarding the life of one's beast is a righteous thing to do and is characteristic of a righteous person. The way a righteous person behaves is a model of what a person seeking to become righteous should seek, much as Aristotle, the Stoics, and others thought that certain sages and virtuous people deserved attention as role models.

However, if someone holds a non-traditional view and thinks that Proverbs 12:10 is just one of many conflicting opinions about animals in the Bible, then she will choose the opinion that she thinks best reflects her own value system. Contrast this with the conservative who attempts to let the Bible form their value system. John R. W. Stott, generally considered to be a conservative, says,

> God has given us permission to domesticate the animal creation, so that we may use their strength to carry our burdens (cf. Num. 7:1-11), their skins to clothe us (cf. Gen. 3:21), and their flesh to feed us (cf. Gen. 9:1-3; Mk. 7:19).[107]

---

[107]John R. W. Stott, "Christians and Animals" Christianity Today (February 10, 1978):38-39.

Stott thinks that because the Bible makes statements like these in certain types of contexts, together with their implications and related accounts of action, within his frame of reference it is safe to claim that these things are God's will. In particular, if the Bible text explicitly says that God says something, then that makes the case unequivocal; God surely did say it. Stott thinks that these Bible statements, therefore, divinely authorize him to use animals as burden bearers. For the conservative, such Bible statements are far more important than statements of human origin. More is said on this after the next section and in the hermeneutics section.

**Liberal View**

Some think that the traditional view is no longer tenable. They think that as the years have passed, more information disproving the traditional view has come to light about the history in the Bible and the background of the book itself. As Alan Richardson says, "The rise of biblical scholarship made necessary a new doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture."[108]

This different way of looking at the Bible says essentially that the Bible is a compilation of writings which began as stories, sermons, legends, etc., and were eventually captured in written form by unknown writers for different reasons. Subsequently, the early versions of biblical works were,

> taken up by later authors or redactors who also incorporated, rewrote, and reinterpreted Israel's past for their own audiences, and . . . this process continued until the text received its present form.[109]

There is no single person whose particular formulation of this basic view fits everyone in the liberal camp. But Julius Wellhausen set forth such a cogent depiction of the process (generally referred to as the documentary hypothesis) that it set the

---

[108]Alan Richardson, A Preface to Bible Study (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944):33.

[109]Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, To Each Its Own Meaning eds. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993):30.

standard for ages to come.[110] He believed that the Hexateuch was the product of a redactor editing, cutting, and pasting together the writings of four proto-Bible authors (J, E, P, and D). Each of the four original documents had its own identifiable characteristics (names used for God, stylistic differences, vocabulary, repetition, etc.). This became the standard way that source criticism (which emphasizes the nature of the original written documents), form criticism (which emphasizes the nature of the original oral traditions), and similar schools of thought identified the true origins of the biblical materials. With the advent of these critical methods of studying and explaining the Bible, "the traditional view of the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible . . . was fore ever [sic] disproved . . . ."[111]

Of course, Wellhausen's version of the documentary hypothesis did not remain static for long. Once scholars believed that by studying the Biblical text they could discover things about origins of the Bible, others found sources within the sources, multiplying their own criteria for identification of sources, and subdividing each of the four segments into dozens of other authors, and earlier documents. Sections of the Old Testament other than the Hexeteuch were also investigated in this way, and this led to theories about multiple and late authorship which further undermined the traditional view. The prophets were subjected to the critical methodology of searching for the *true* Bible writers, and Isaiah, for example, was considered the product of at least two writers.

One of the outstanding names in critical studies of the Old Testament was Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932). His work was the precursor to form criticism and had a lot to do with turning Bible study into the search for pre-biblical speech forms.[112]

---

[110]Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel (New York: Meridian, 1957).

[111]Richardson 25.

[112]Hermann Gunkel, The Legends of Genesis (New York: Schocken, 1964).

Rather than give too much credit to Wellhausen's four individual writers, Gunkel thought that some of the Old Testament stories were traditional folklore which had been passed along, told so many times that accretions slowly built up around the central story lines. Gunkel even thought that to a certain extent, the stages of development could be uncovered by studying the finished product.[113] His emphasis on traditions and their capacity to reveal Israel's religious past was inevitably taken to the next level by Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971). More and more, study of the Bible changed emphasis from the study of doctrine to become the study of religion from a scientific, anthropological approach.

Von Rad accepted Gunkel's substitution of "a historical reconstruction of events" with "a historical reconstruction of theological beliefs," as well as his greater interest in "what Israel believed" than in "what happened to Israel."[114] He believed that the most important thing to learn about the Old Testament is not found by trying to force events like the Exodus to be literally true as historical occurrences. Rather, it is found in the religious traditions of Israel and in how and why those traditions grew the way they did.[115] Therefore,

> The process of tradition, rather than the political history of Israel, is the true *locus* of God's self-revelation to Israel; to enter imaginatively into that process *is* therefore to grasp theological truth.[116]

There were many important moments in the history of this movement, but the limitations of this paper must exclude their discussion. This approach picked up new and different ideas along the way and inexorably spread to the New Testament. Scholars attempted to identify the oral forms with which the New Testament texts

---

[113]Robert Morgan with John Barton, Biblical Interpretation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988):96-98.

[114]Morgan with Barton 100.

[115]See Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch" in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays (London: SCM, 1984):1-78.

[116]Morgan with Barton 101.

originated (narrative, sermon, poem, etc.). The scholars surmised that when the stories, sermons, and poems were eventually put into writing, they maintained to some extent the oral forms in which they had been passed from generation to generation.

Source critics focused on written sources in much the same way that the form critics had focused on oral sources. They supposed that written sources were circulating long before the Bible came into being and the authors of these pieces had likely rewritten, edited, added to, and reduced the ancient stories until they were suitable for the written medium. No matter which type of critical methodology a person chose to follow, the assumptions upon which the critical method was founded, combined with liberal theology, eventually created the main alternatives to the traditional view of Scripture.

Credit must be given to the way liberal theology influenced the attack on the traditional view of Scripture. As Donald McKim puts it, "Liberal theology reacted sharply against the traditional orthodox view of the revelation and authority of the Bible."[117] The work of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and others changed the way one could think about both God and religion, and these modifications demanded a change in the way people thought about the Bible. Before the advent of liberal theology, theology had to do with establishing what the Bible says and how that applies to current situations. But from the liberal position, theology "is conceived as essentially imaginative construction of a picture or understanding of God, humanity, and the world" rather than "essentially translation or interpretation of an authoritative Scripture or tradition . . . ."[118] One can easily see how the fusion of this mode of thought with Bultmann's existential approach to religion and the Bible, along with the

---

[117]McKim, What Christians Believe About the Bible 44.

[118]Gordon D. Kaufman, "Doing Theology From a Liberal Christian Point of View" in Woodbridge and McComiskey 410.

historical-critical methodology, had a staggering impact on discussions about the nature and purpose of the Bible.

Part of the impact of this stream of thought is that there is no monolithic "biblical position" on anything. In this view, the Bible has many co-existing views about things like animal *telos*. Ethicists who hold a liberal position, therefore, should feel comfortable disagreeing about the biblical position on animal *telos* since what they are truly disagreeing about are their prior notions of animal *telos* which grow out of their value systems. Either side of the disagreement could quote biblical texts which support their view, but what does that prove? If one believes that vegetarianism is the most humane position, she emphasizes Genesis chapter one. But the other side could believe that eating animals is acceptable and thus emphasize Genesis chapter nine. As far as both sides are concerned, both views are stated in the Bible. More will be said about Genesis chapters one and nine and the way conservatives and liberals think differently about them shortly.

The conservatives, however, think that there is at least potentially a consistent Bible position about animal *telos*. That is, any passage that contextually purports to be a statement from God can be combined with other such statements, so that together they form the biblical philosophy of animal *telos*.

## THE QUESTION OF THE BIBLE'S HISTORICITY

When the non-traditional, multiple proto-Bible-authors-trend was eventually applied to the New Testament, it dovetailed with the old quest for the historical Jesus, i.e., the attempt to separate the Jesus of history (the actual person) from the Christ of faith (an alleged invention of the early church). This attempt prompted writers like Bultmann to produce criteria that could effectively strip away the mythological accretions about Christ which had developed as the early church told the story of Christ over and over again during the gospel's pre-literary days.

Bultmann believed that if he could accurately read the myths, then he could unlock the true meaning of the New Testament. Thus, by de-mythologizing the New Testament, he attempted to recover the meaning behind the mythology that the church had added. In this way, his work was a counterpart to Von Rad's work in the Old Testament.

Bultmann's attempt to interpret the Bible from an eschatological framework, as opposed to seeing the Bible as history, along with his demythologizing campaign, resulted in his acceptance of "only about forty sayings as genuine and the mere event (the 'thatness') of the life and death of Jesus on the cross" as actually reflecting historical events.[119] His use of existential buzzwords like "thatness" and living "authentic and inauthentic lives" are clues to the influence of Martin Heidegger. Bultmann also acknowledges his debt to Karl Barth, to the eschatological views of Johannes Weiss,[120] and to the History of Religion school of thought.[121] Accordingly, Bultmann thought that the most important part of the Christian faith was whether a person had "an existential encounter with Christ."[122] Many writers followed his lead in deemphasizing the historical nature of biblical events as that which must be believed, and reorienting the entire paradigm of what the Bible is. They had come to believe that the biblical text is substantially myth (as opposed to factual history which occurred in space and time) and thus has to be interpreted in non-mythological language in order to get the Bible's message. Biblical events such as the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus are not about empirical facts, but are about more profound, metaphysical truths.[123]

---

[119]Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978):199.

[120]Bultmann 11-12.

[121]Guthrie, New Testament Introduction 194.

[122]Ibid. 193-194.

[123]For a current example of this view, see John Hick, The Metaphor of God Incarnate (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993).

The historical-critical method led some scholars to become skeptical of historical studies in general, but especially the true nature of Jesus.[124] How can anyone successfully read history after acknowledging the inability of a writer to separate facts from beliefs? Too many barriers separate modern from ancient history, effectively removing the possibility of knowing what occurred so long ago. Thomas Oden's entire apt description of how postmoderns have reacted to and transcended the critical mindset is important, but his witty comment on the critical method is appropriate here; "The modern critical spirit sought to recover the history of Jesus, yet in its endgame phase it has resulted in the virtual loss of any possibility of knowing Jesus historically."[125] This is just one of the many paradoxes of the critical method. Others will be noted in another section of this chapter.

This chapter's focus is still on those monotheists who believe the Bible is somehow authoritative. But members of this group obviously disagree about whether the Bible is historically accurate (or whether it was even intended to be). Hence, part of the presuppositional wedge between them is the question of whether the Bible is literally true or only symbolically true.

The traditional conservative view ordinarily asserts that the Bible is an accurate historical record, miracles and all.[126] There are sections where symbolism is used to tell a story or make a point, just as people have always used symbolic language in their discussions. But this view claims that the main story line is not simply symbolic; it is about actual events that occurred in space-time history.

In the Bultmanian lineage, Spong has no patience with this outlook. He says with great disdain,

---

[124]E. P. Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus (London: Penguin Press, 1993):5.

[125]Thomas C. Oden, After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990):106.

[126]See R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, eds., In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

> It is a pity that this truth cannot be heard until the Bible is freed from the hands of those who are in fact destroying Christianity with their literalistic claims even though in their naiveté they believe themselves to be serving the Bible faithfully.[127]

Those who hold this view think that the Old Testament is largely (though not all agree that it is entirely) a collection of myths, and that the New Testament is the same. For them, "more attention is given to [the Scriptures] as symbolic documents than as historical documents."[128] For example, Marcus Borg says, "the meaning of the resurrection is that people within the early Christian movement continued to experience the 'empowering presence' of Jesus after his death." Hence, for Borg and those of similar belief like John Dominic Crossan (a participant in The Jesus Seminar), "The resurrection of Jesus has nothing to do with his corpse."[129]

Some think that urban legends are mythical but useful stories that comprise part of a culture's folklore. Although none of the stories is literally true, they are interesting, easy to remember, and thus continue to be told and retold. In this way, urban legends function as reminders of societal and ethical norms. For example, the legend of the couple who park in a lonely wooded area to "make out" is nothing but a condemnation of teen pre-marital sex, preserved and disseminated in mythical form. The story did not occur in space-time history. But the story continues to transmit truths even though it might pick up additional details as it is retold in different cultural areas of the country. For example, in the South, the "Goat Man" kills the teens but in the North, the "Hook Man" does it. Anyone who takes this story for the literal truth and adds objective significance to the idea that Goat Man means something has made a big mistake.

---

[127]John S. Spong, Rescuing the Bible From Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991):226.

[128]Donald E. Miller, The Case for Liberal Christianity (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981):36.

[129]Paul Copan, ed. Will The Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998):119.

This is essentially how liberal theologians, i.e., adherents of the non-historical hypothesis, look at the Bible, except that they are working with spiritual truths. The stories are not literally true as far as being events that occurred in space-time history, but they carry spiritual truths in the symbolism of their characters. They tell something about how people in different places and times have used the baggage of their own environment to communicate religious and ethical beliefs and principles. Brevard Childs acknowledges the philosophical problem at this level of hermeneutics when he says,

> In the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and his followers the Bible is seen as a deposit of metaphors which contain inherent powers by which to interpret and order the present world of experience, regardless of the source of the imagery. The concern is to illuminate what lies "ahead" (devant) of the text, not behind. This approach shows little or no interest in the historical development of the biblical text or even in the historical context of the canonical text.[130]

The Judeo-Christian tradition puts tremendous emphasis on its historicity. Its holy books are replete with historical details like cities, nations, genealogy, geography, politics, topography, government officials, ancient cultural practices, dates, etc. The Bible regularly deals with dates, names, and places that take the stories out of the realm of what is generally considered to be fiction, and put them at checkable places, at checkable times, and with checkable people in space-time history. Because of this characteristic of the Judeo-Christian holy books, Bible students commonly want to look into the history of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Rome, Greece, et al.

How does a person go about testing the accuracy of a book which purports to have recorded events from the past? Secular historians can be examined for corroboration in some cases. Ancient manuscripts (official and unofficial documents), numismatics, architecture, ostraca, and other sources can also be checked for

---

[130]Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979):77.

corroboration. Similar cultures and cognate languages sometimes show that recorded events and sayings which seem strange to twentieth century westerners were regarded as reasonable and normal occurrences in other parts of the world a thousand or more years ago.

Since the books employ the historical mode, historical verification is an important issue for those religious groups. That is not to say that they think all of the details in the Bible are checkable. Whereas the Bible has its historical core, it also has an emphasis on the miraculous. Verifying the accuracy of miracle accounts involves other issues like the trustworthiness of witnesses, the witnesses' proximity to the event, and whether they had a reason to distort the truth. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

However, if a document can be shown to be accurate in its record of normal events, that should get a person's attention because it might lend credence to its accounts of abnormal events as well. If the Bible can be proven historically accurate, this does not mean that such in itself would prove that the miracles occurred. It does not. But those who assent to its historical accuracy would be encouraged to consider the miracles which it records right along with the historical details. Since in a theistic universe miracles are certainly possible (unless miracle accounts are to be dismissed out of hand), they should be investigated.

Barr makes it sound rather foolish for conservatives to be concerned about the history associated with the Bible. He thinks that even if the conservatives could prove that the books were written early and/or that certain events were actual occurrences, it would not change anything. For him, the real issue is that "the understanding of truth and meaning as applied to the Bible has become thoroughly different" so that,

> the understanding of the Bible that has grown up in the tradition of modern critical scholarship and modern theology would remain totally different from that which conservative evangelicals want us to adopt.[131]

All of the conservatives' efforts are thus "a waste of time."[132]

But Barr begs the question of which approach is correct. If his view of truth about the Bible is wrong, and truth is much more objective and historical, then he should change his view of truth. If he is also wrong about the late date of the prophetic books, then they were giving detailed prophecies centuries ahead of time, an attribute which should impress anyone. Further, if a book so unequivocally presents events that occur in historical settings, and does not represent itself as something else (except in certain cases where the text itself makes it clear, as discussed earlier), it makes sense to look at it in this light first and see if what it says about those events was accurate. So much of the Old Testament is built on remembrances of God's historical actions, that to make those actions into mere symbols would be to render a great deal of the Old Testament's inner logic at least irrelevant and perhaps worse.

Consider J. P. Moreland's story of a Jewish friend whose undergraduate degree was in classics from Harvard, his master's degree was in classics from UCLA, and his Ph.D. was also in classics from UCLA. When they first met, he told Moreland that he was a Christian. Knowing that he was a Jew, Moreland asked him, "How did you become a Christian?" He said,

> Dr. Moreland, I have studied myth most of my education. I know the earmarks of myth; that's all I study. My undergraduate training was in mythology; my graduate training has been in mythology. And I was practicing Koine Greek reading the Gospel of Luke, and I got halfway through it, and as a Jew, I said, "My God, this man really did these things. What am I going to do? This is history. It reads like history. It doesn't read like myth. I know what myth tastes like because all I do is read it, and that is not myth.[133]

---

[131]Barr, Fundamentalism 159.

[132]Ibid.

[133]J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, Does God Exist? The Great Debate (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990):60.

As innovative and fascinating as the recent historical-critical approach is, Donald Hagner suggests,

> Because revelation comes to us in and through history, historical criticism is not an option but a necessity . . . Critical study of the Bible of this kind was being done long before the invention of the so-called historical-critical method.[134]

Historians, archaeologists, skeptics, exegetes, commentators, and others were raising questions of this nature long before Von Rad and Bultmann came along. Oden suggests that the bases of the critical approach existed incipiently among ancient Christian exegetes, but the ideology and reductionism of the modern approach essentially set it apart from the earlier efforts.[135]

Three popular reasons that liberals have offered for rejecting the traditional conservative view of the Bible, particularly the historicity, accuracy, and internal harmony of the Bible, have been, (1) contradictions "of known truth" as between the biblical account of particular historical events and secular records of those events, of such a nature that they could be considered mistakes on the part of the writers perhaps due to their pre-scientific understanding of things, (2) internal contradictions between biblical passages, and (3) morally questionable statements.[136] Reasons like these motivated S. R. Driver to say in 1897, "The price at which alone the traditional view can be maintained is too high."[137] Or, as John Spong puts it, "A literal Bible presents me with far more problems than assets."[138]

---

[134]Donald Hagner, "The New Testament, History, and the Historical-Critical Method," New Testament Criticism and Interpretation David Black and David Dockery, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991):74.

[135]Oden 109-110.

[136]Paul J. Achtemeier, The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980):42.

[137]S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the O. T. (New York: Meridian Books, 1956):viii.

[138]Spong 24.

This is one reason why Barr claims that although some who hold the traditional view of Scripture are well-informed scholars, generally speaking, it is a naive view, and well-informed people reject it.[139] It is interesting that some people, however, leave Barr's camp when they check the history for themselves and become more conservative when they find that it fits the facts better than they had been told in their university courses.[140] Removing any ambiguity about their fervor in this matter, Barr compares rejecting the critical method to rejecting the Copernican revolution.[141] Spong contrasts his point of view with

> an anti-intellectual approach to Christianity on the part of literal-minded, conservative Christians and a departure from the organized Christian church . . .[142]

He agrees with Barr and others that the conservative approach is naive. They do not think that it has kept up with the scientific age and Spong asserts that the "few pseudoradical thinkers" who protect it will reduce Christianity to "one more ancient mythology that will take its place alongside the religions of Mount Olympus."[143]

Of course, a crucial question is how a person can recognize the contradictions. Principles must govern this procedure, including a proper definition of what constitutes a genuine contradiction.[144] For example, one should not simply look on the surface for merely apparent contradictions and jump to unwarranted conclusions because (as is true in life in general) sometimes apparent contradictions are only differences in word meanings, different settings, points of view, timing, different writers adding or leaving out details of the same event, translation problems, a lack of

---

[139]Barr, Beyond Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984):174.

[140]For example, see W. M. Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery On the Trustworthiness of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953). For his background and change of mind, see especially pages 3-31.

[141]Barr, Fundamentalism 173.

[142]Spong 9.

[143]Spong 31-32.

[144]As suggested in texts like Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: Wilde, 1956): 184-195.

information on the part of the reader, or other matters that require thought and suspension of bias.[145] When conservatives respond in this manner, however, they are sometimes met with further allegations of "forcing" the biblical texts into strained explanations.[146] In reality, the truth sometimes sounds strained depending on the situation (as any police officer or parent of teenagers can attest). It should not be surprising that in a document as large, old, and multicultural as the Bible, this should happen occasionally.

Of course, there are also cases where,

> the biblical writers were not as accurate and precise as historians would be today. They give approximations, general identifications, and popular descriptions that those who examine details may not always appreciate. However, when we discover the writer's main purpose and see how carefully he handles this, the failure to be preoccupied with minor details may then appear as an asset and not a liability.[147]

Judith Casanova and others add a fourth reason to reject the traditional view. They say, "Nothing is infallible except God" and "To treat anything creaturely as infallible is to move dangerously close to idolatry, the worship of something that is creaturely."[148] First, just because God is infallible and something else is infallible, does not mean that the something else will be, must be, or is in danger of being idolized as a result of being infallible. There are always extremes, of course. Some people profane sacred things while others exalt the profane. But people's speculated reactions do not

---

[145]For examples of explanations for the most common allegations of contradictions and/or discrepancies in the Bible, see Gleason L. Archer, Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982); George W. DeHoff, Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained (Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff Publications, 1975); and John W. Haley, An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible (Nashville: B. C. Goodpasture, 1951).

[146]Books like Ruth Green's seem to do a lot of this. With a little consideration for the importance of context, many of her alleged contradictions would disappear. Ruth Hurmence Green, The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible (Madison, Wisconsin: Freedom From Religion Foundation, 1979). For lists of the more commonly alleged contradictions, see Barr Fundamentalism 40ff. and Spong 15ff.

[147]Mickleson, 93

[148]Judith Casanova, John B. Cobb, Jr., Lewis Ford, William Beardslee, and Joseph Deegan, "What Can We Believe About the Bible?" in What's A Christian To Do? David P. Polk, ed. (St. Louis: Center For Process Studies, 1991):18.

prove this point. Second, if God is infallible, it seems reasonable that he could deliver an infallible message even by the hands of otherwise fallible human beings. Is it impossible for an infallible God to deliver an infallible message to humanity? Third, if these authors take the position that there is anything at all in the Bible, any segment that is legitimately from God, it follows that someone could treat that particular section like an idol just as they think someone would treat an entire infallible book from God. Thus, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with thinking that God could produce an infallible book.

From that point, the argument could be filled in to show that it is reasonable to conclude that the Bible is such a book. Some begin with the internal characteristics of the Bible (like prophecy, harmony, practicality) and link that with external information (like early church history, transmission of the biblical text through history, comparison to other holy books). Others begin with prior considerations. For example, if God exists, and if he created human beings, it makes sense that he would reveal himself to them.[149] If he revealed himself to human beings, it makes sense that it would be more than a purely subjective, one-person-at-a-time method of communication. Otherwise, although intuitional communication would benefit each person who received it, it would not be beneficial to others who had not received it.

However, if the communication were more objective in oral and/or written form, this would benefit both the reader/hearer and the people to whom the message could be passed along. If God's message were in an objective format as oral and/or written rather than wholly subjective, then it would be propositional. If it were propositional, then principles of critical thinking would apply to it. This means that conservatives believe that they can look at the Bible, apply rules of critical thinking

---

[149]The argument in the following paragraph comes from Ralph Gilmore, "The First Principles of Hermeneutics" in The Freed-Hardeman Lectures (Henderson, Tennessee: Freed-Hardeman University, 1986):153-160.

and interpretation and discover some basic principles about how God wants people to think about animal *telos* by carefully examining the Bible's statements about animals, the implications of those statements, and the appropriate biblical examples that relate to the same. There are dozens of monographs about the divine origin of the Bible. This paragraph just points to a couple of possible approaches.

**A Humean Approach**

Even if God exists (addressed earlier in this chapter), why should one think that God had anything to do with producing the Bible? Would it not be more reasonable to conclude that the Bible came about in almost any other way than to say that it came from God? David Hume's "Of Miracles" should be considered in any discussion of this kind.

In his complex, sceptical system the Self is little more than a series of consecutive enduring conscious acts (as opposed to an enduring Cartesian or Lockean Self), the relationship of cause and effect is at least dubious, and matters of fact are by their very nature fleeting. Supernatural claims will be disputed more vehemently from this frame of reference than they would under certain other systems of thought. Yet, his insights are so penetrating that even writers who do not share all of Hume's views continue to use his criticisms of miracles even two hundred years after he penned them.

As Hume sees it, miracle claims are based in matters of fact. Matters of fact are based on sensate experience. Thus, anyone who did not personally observe an alleged miracle, and therefore merely heard about it, is depending on testimony for proof. Hume says that sense experience (rather than human testimony) should be one's judge about what is true and false in matters of fact. He does not dismiss the valuable role of testimony entirely, however. He says, "there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that

which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators."[150] Part of his concern about miracles and miracle claims is that the value of eyewitness testimony depends on a witness' veracity. Witness veracity is a crucial consideration and involves several facets.

Because Hume raises serious questions about the relationship between cause and effect, one might think that his views about the finality of natural laws might be sceptical. However, he says that because experience leads people to think that certain events follow certain actions, one must not allow exceptions to the rule just because some people say they saw an one.[151] A number of problems are associated with testimony. For example, different people might experience events differently, particularly if they disagree about the possibility of supernatural phenomena. Hume presents some doubts about the role of testimony in miracle claims. He says that suspicion should arise about testimony whenever:

1. witnesses to the same event oppose one another
2. the witnesses' character is in serious doubt
3. there are only very few witnesses
4. their testimony is given under suspicious conditions such as when they have something to gain by it or in similarly influential conditions.[152]

Add to this Hume's scepticism about miracles because

1. a miracle is a violation of natural laws[153]
2. the many false miracle claims in history
3. the human tendency to embellish a story
4. the observation that miracle claims are chiefly observed in "ignorant and barbarous nations"[154]

Therefore, Hume says, "the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."[155] But

---

[150]David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977):74.
[151]Ibid.
[152]Ibid. 75.
[153]Ibid. 76.
[154]Ibid. 79.
[155]Ibid. 76.

Hume's approach could beg the questions of the possibility of God's existence and activity. If God exists, possible acts of God must be figured into the question of whether natural laws are on rare occasions negotiable by their creator in order to make an important point to human beings. Otherwise, the possibility of miracles is rejected *a priori*. The fact that a given individual has not seen natural laws suspended or manipulated in a miraculous context does not itself negate the possibility for all times and places of such events occurring, particularly in a theistic universe. Hume's apparent approximation of this stance encouraged a commentator to call it, "a rather wooden dogmatism of disbelief." As Antony Flew also said,

> For against all his own high, skeptical principles, Hume tended to take it for granted that what in his own day he and all his fellow men of sense firmly believed about the order of nature constituted not just humanly fallible opinion, but the incorrigible last word.[156]

Flew insisted that later psychology and psychosomatic medicine prove that what Hume dismissed is possible. But in an apparent *a priori* dismissal of the possibility of any supernatural explanation of some events, he also dismissed even these natural explanations.[157]

Compare C. S. Lewis' view that, "What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is therefore useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question."[158] Hume's case could be read as saying that since miracles are impossible, no amount of evidence will be convincing. If people already reject the existence of ghosts or extraterrestrial UFO's, they can write off unusual events as swamp gas or other natural phenomena. The philosophical issue comes first.

---

[156]Antony Flew, "Miracles," in Encyclopedia of Philosophy vol. 5, Paul Edwards, ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1967):351.

[157]Ibid.

[158]C. S. Lewis, Miracles: A Preliminary Study (London: Collins Books, 1947):7.

That being said, assume for the moment that particular prophecies in the Bible (or elsewhere for the purposes of this discussion) accurately foretell future details, and assume further that the future actually bears this out. Does this necessarily mean that God produced the phenomena that the Bible calls "prophecy"? Maybe there are more reasonable explanations of such things. For instance, what if some of the biblical prophets had nothing more than extraordinary powers of precognition (as modern psychics claim for themselves)? Or, maybe extremely unlikely coincidences led to events that only appear to have been the fulfillment of a prophecy (sometimes truth is stranger than fiction). Or, maybe people living in the time of the fulfillment simply saw to it that the prophecy found fulfillment by their own actions in order to give greater credence to their apocalyptic understanding of things. Then again, maybe the fulfillment is merely a matter of selective interpretation (as in the case of some who read Nostradamus). These explanations do not necessitate the insertion of a supernatural dimension.

Biblical prophecies, however, were not self-contained prognostications, as when a psychic tells Joe Bob that his girlfriend will leave him for another man. Nor is given prophecy one of a series of unrelated and ambiguous statements, like the quatrains of Nostradamus. Biblical prophecies occurred in very specific historical and religious contexts. That is, the prophecies occurred in a particular setting and as part of a mindset that accepted theism as properly basic. The Jews accepted the prophecies as part of a divinely arranged ordering of events that would culminate in something that they anticipated for fifteen hundred years. Unlikely coincidences sometimes occur; but in the biblical timeline, so many happy coincidences occurred that the coincidences themselves need an explanation, even if combined with a few cases of precognition.

Francis Beckwith suggests that one must take a different approach and consider one miracle at a time, examining its purpose, timing, existential significance, religious context, and human impossibility.[159] For example, seeing a burning bush is not that unusual. But if the bush is not consumed by the fire, that is different. If an unusual voice speaks from the bush, that is even more different. If in conjunction with the voice, one's hand turns leprous, then pure again, and if one's staff becomes a serpent, then a staff again, all in response to a voice emanating from the bush, this is extremely different. As Locke believed, outward signs like these would go far in helping to distinguish merely unusual or unique events from miracles. They could take the discussion out of the realm of merely amazing or unique events and (if the Bible can be believed on these matters) into supernatural explanations of these phenomena. The question then becomes whether they are believable based on testimony.

Look at it from the other side for a moment. If Hume is wrong about the possibility of miracles, what would it take for him to give credence to testimony about one? He thought it a general maxim, "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, that the fact, which it endeavors to establish."[160] He adds to this the principle, "If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion."[161]

Another interesting question arises here regarding presuppositions and evidence. Given any paradigm, some views seem incredible. Given belief X, belief Z is incredible to believer A. Believer A could demand believer B to present evidence for

---

[159]Francis J. Beckwith, David Hume's Argument Against Miracles: A Critical Analysis (New York: University Press of America,1989):64.

[160]Hume 77.

[161]Ibid.

belief Z, but adds that it will have to be extraordinary evidence because Z is such an incredible belief. Does this not assume to some extent that X is already proven to be the more rational view, automatically downgrading the feasibility of Z? The proof would have to be what A considers above the ordinary evidence because it is something outside A's belief system.

Of course, a person responds to information not only intellectually, but also volitionally and emotionally. Thus, there is no guarantee that anyone will react to a given piece of information in a particular fashion.[162] In Oliver Stones' conspiratorial model of the Kennedy assassination, the idea that a single man might have killed the president of the United States is incredible.[163] In order to convince a perfectly honest and unbiased Stone that the "magic bullet" actually injured both the president and the Texas governor, the evidence would have to be paradigm-shaking powerful proof indeed. What evidence could do it? Would any amount of evidence be sufficient to convince him or does his belief system preclude it *a priori*? Perhaps one could begin at the lowest levels of the conspiratorial mindset by showing that several assassins and would-be assassins have been individuals, then proceed slowly to the nuts and bolts of the Kennedy murder. Nevertheless, one might imagine Stone saying something like, "If you are going to prove to me that one lone nut named Oswald killed the president of the United States, the evidence will have to be extraordinary because that is such an extraordinary claim that you are making."

The claim is only extraordinary given the unbeliever's stance. From the believer's stance, it makes perfect sense. Thus, as in the animal *telos* and the Bible debate, more intricate details are here than meet the eye. It is not simply a matter of

---

[162]Stuart C. Hackett, The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim: A Philosophical and Critical Apologetic (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984):16.

[163]In his words, "an account of the assassination more fictional than I could ever imagine." Oliver Stone, "Stone's JFK: A Higher Truth?" in JFK: The Book of the Film (New York: Applause Books, 1992.

"what does the Bible say about animals?" The reasons behind the disagreements and misunderstandings are more at the level of questions like "Does God exist?" "What is inspiration?" "How does one distinguish a truly divine revelation from mere enthusiasm (as Locke put it)?" "What is the Bible?" Of course, some answers to these questions seem more reasonable, while other answers involve contradictions, double standards, etc. Some paradigms also are more reasonable and/or more cohesive than others. All should be subject to doubt and criticism. But why should the proof of a proposition that seems strange within one paradigm be classified as intrinsically extraordinary if it can be reasonably grounded and argued? Are there two kinds of evidence: ordinary and *extra*ordinary? What constitutes extraordinary evidence might be a person specific, or a paradigm specific problem, rather than an absolute problem.

As Tillich says, it is in the nature and purpose of a miracle to elicit an "ontological shock" such that "the mind is thrown out of its normal balance, shaken in its structure."[164] In this sense, one might say that it is part of a miracle's job to shake paradigms. A miracle itself is extraordinary, but how could the testimonial evidence be extraordinary as well?

Thus, maybe asking for extraordinary evidence in the way Hume and others do is asking for too much. Perhaps they should ask for evidence sufficient to justify a reasonable conclusion, which may turn out to be unreasonable for some. Unless people are open to possibilities which might shake the foundations of their paradigm in some field, by insisting on extraordinary evidence, they could be asking for something which is inherently impossible to deliver.

Now, to restate the question at the beginning of this section: Would it not be more reasonable to conclude that the Bible came about in almost any other way than to

---

[164]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951):113.

say that God is its ultimate author? Given the limitations of certain paradigms, yes it would be more reasonable. In such a case, the options listed earlier (precognition, etc.) might seem to be more reasonable explanations of the Bible phenomenon even though they stretch one's concept of mathematical probability. But given a certain set of reasonable presuppositions, a good case can be made than God exists, that God could and would communicate with humanity in a variety of media, and that God could and has seen to it that a book was written which is composed of a divine message to humanity.

Therefore, it is not simple claims that should be accepted at face value, but good claims, as noted in Locke's discussion of revelation claims. Hume's points are well taken. They provide a few of the more salient checkpoints for these claims. But they do not disprove the possibility of miracles.

**The Influence of Culture**

Another literature exists that critiques those who critique the traditional position. It examines the basic approach of the historical-critical method in its incarnations as form, source, tradition, redaction, etc., criticism, as well as individuals' approaches like those of Von Rad, Bultmann, Martin Dibelius, and many others. Dozens of books deal with critiques of those scholars' work, so this chapter can only briefly call attention to a couple of fundamental problems.

One concern is that the critics' stance on the surface seemed to be scientific, modern, and objectively based. But, as it turns out, it was "none other than the historically conditioned place where *we* [i.e., the critics] happen to be standing."[165] Did Bultmann and others realize that while they were eloquently describing how locked into the first century Palestinian culture the New Testament writers were, they themselves might have been committing the same error, unknowingly collaborating on a

[165]Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973):3.

myth for their own time, i.e., expressing their thinking on the eternal enigma but within the spiritual and scholarly nomenclature of their own modern environment? Surely, some of the non-traditionalist writers understood this very precarious position. But the problem was widespread enough to motivate Oden to respond,

> Insofar as it pits modern methods of inquiry against all ancient wisdoms, modern critical method displays an egocentric ideological bias against all forms of premodern consciousness. Such truncated criticism is best called not criticism but simply prejudice. It is a reductionist criticism that imports the philosophical assumptions of naturalistic reductionism as the central feature of the study of Scripture and tradition.[166]

Oden raises a philosophical question here about the ramifications of overemphasizing the role of culture lock in a person's thinking. That is, even assuming that *neither* camp (traditionalists or non-traditionalists) was sure what the Truth is, they could agree that if earlier writers could not comprehend how culturally bound their thinking was, then modern writers would likely be in no better position to think and write without the same influence of their own cultures.

Conservatives generally agree that although they cannot have firsthand experience of the past, they can negotiate most historical methodological problems (such as cultural limitations) to the extent that they can arrive at a high degree of truth from the past.[167] More is said about this topic later in this chapter.

**Concerns With Critical Methodology**

Some critics of Bultmann and those with similar approaches are concerned about how much the critical methodology resembles psychoanalysis (an area with its own set of numerous presuppositions). It attempts to look beneath the surface, look past the obvious, and follow trails down to their roots in something that does not really resemble what appears overtly. The critical method aspired to peel away layers

---

[166]Oden 110.

[167]A number of books about the historicity of Jesus deal with underlying problems of historiography. For example, see I. Howard Marshall, I Believe in the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977):27-52.

of expression of something embedded more deeply, very much like a Freudian methodology. Yet, both were firmly established on a great deal of speculation that itself does not appear on the surface.[168] When some non-traditionalists see a biblical text and eschew the meaning on the face of the text for an allegorical, moral, mystical message, each text becomes a riddle to solve. When a Freudian hears a patient say that she is afraid of heights, it is a riddle to solve. Rather than take the problem at face value and dismantle the patient's fears by systematic desensitization or other popular techniques, the Freudian would be more likely to ask about the patient's relationship with her father or whether she was sexually abused as an infant. This topic deserves further research into possible Freudian influences on Bultmann's thought.

The "psychoanalytic" approach to the Bible also shares similarities with the allegorical methods of Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Philo of Alexandria. Rather than deal with straight line propositional statements like "there were four rivers in Eden," and think that it means four literal rivers existed in a literal place, these men could find all sorts of allegorical truths there about preaching the gospel, virtuous living, and other lessons. Some of the non-traditionalists' utilization of the critical method is like this in a way, except that they have a different philosophy about the Bible, they are far more widely accepted by scholars, and they take allegorization to a new level. For instance, John Crossan reads that two men were making their way to Emmaus when the resurrected Jesus spoke to them,[169] but Crossan does not believe that this happened to anyone in actual fact. He thinks that it is rather "the metaphoric condensation of the first years of early Christian thought and practice into one parabolic afternoon." From this comes his oft quoted statement, "Emmaus never

---

[168]Oden 112.
[169]Luke 24

happened. Emmaus always happens."[170] For some of the same reasons that some in the field of psychiatry reject the fundamental tenets of psychoanalysis, some in the fields of philosophy and theology reject the tenets of views like Crossan's (such as narrative theology).

There are other concerns with the critical method which are covered in several monographs. What about the methods whereby ancient stories and texts are passed along? Are these merely assumed to be true of the Bible? Is there evidence that early Christians practiced anything like this in the first two centuries?

Admittedly, when a liberal writer makes claims about ancient Christian oral traditions and the evolution of the biblical documents, there are nuggets of truth behind the speculations. It makes sense that Christians would talk about the deeds of Christ between the time they occurred and the time they were recorded in writing. How could someone experience those things and *not* talk about them? If nothing were written about those events, as witnesses began dying out, even if God were not interested in doing it, surely someone would want to make a written record of such things (compare with efforts to record the experiences of Holocaust survivors).

Papias lived sometime around the end of the first century A. D. until sometime around the middle of the second century. He claimed to have heard the gospel from eyewitnesses. If he found someone who had followed one of the "elders" he says that he asked them,

> what Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, or Thomas or James, or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and whatever Aristion and the elder John, the Lord's disciples, were saying. For I did not think that information from books would profit me as much as information from a living and abiding voice.[171]

---

[170]John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography (San Francisco: Harper, 1994):197.

[171]J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, eds. and transls., The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992):563.

Papias apparently wrote five volumes about the Lord's sayings and expositions. But so far there is no hard evidence indicating that Papias or other early believers added anything to the biblical manuscripts that preceded them, that legendary materials otherwise affixed themselves to the actual events via the retelling of the deeds, or that works like Papias' somehow became the New Testament documents. Nor are there extant ancient written accounts of a procedure by which oral accounts about Jesus developed (although some of those in the liberal camp speak of "laws of tradition" that governed the process).[172] There are writers like Polycarp, a first century disciple of the apostle John, who quote biblical statements and relate the gospel events. But there is no observable accretion of legendary material in connection with the gospel events. David Strauss says that the accretions occurred "by degrees, by steps which can no longer be traced . . . ."[173] In the absence of that evidence, and by studying the evidence in early manuscripts, conservatives observe that the gospel events seem to have been described in the beginning as today's biblical documents describe them.

Nor are there extant proto-biblical documents. Once again, it makes sense that some people might have written their own accounts,[174] and there are many writings available from early believers as one might expect, but so far there are no extant extra-biblical manuscripts of the proto-biblical nature. After Sanders relates the standard non-traditional approach to the oral period, the "proto-gospels" period, and the supposed redaction period of the gospels, he admits, "I wish to emphasize that we do not know that this is precisely how the gospels originated. We infer the process from

---

[172]David Wenham, "Source Criticism," New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods I. Howard Marshall, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977):159.

[173]Strauss 35.

[174]Luke's gospel account even mentions this in 1:1-3.

the finished product."[175] That is, based on certain presuppositions, certain inferences are called for. But the inferences are not necessitated unless the inferer believes certain non-traditional ideas. That is why in this discussion as in the Bible and animal *telos* discussion, scholars disagree.

There is still no actual Q document (part of a hypothesis about the relationship of the synoptic gospels) or its parallel in existence.[176] Of course, just because none of these have yet been found does not mean they will *never* be found. But it should be pressed that these are all speculative answers and should not be accepted as empirical facts. Even the criteria which some of the scholars established to aid them in separating legend from history or distinguishing one of the multiple writers from another (such as Marcan materials versus Q materials) are based on a series of assumptions which other scholars question.

Some think that the critical method as applied to the New Testament fails even to "come to grips with the presence of eyewitnesses, some of them hostile who were in a position to contest any wholesale creation of gospel incidents and sayings."[177] If the gospel events were untrue and/or mythical, why did Christianity's enemies overlook this so often, seeing that Christianity grew first in the very city where those events are said to have occurred?

Some of the critical scholars seem to think that ancient people were not familiar with the use of imagery and metaphor, confusing legends with history and/or telling legends as history. But G. B. Caird shows that the ancients were far more sophisticated in their knowledge and use of imagery than some writers want to credit

---

[175]Sanders 60.
[176]Guthrie 152.
[177]D. A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992):23-25.

them for being.[178] The Old Testament's use of metaphor, fable, and historical storytelling favors this view. Appendix F at the end of this paper incorporates many of the Old Testament metaphors.

Another concern is that some of the form critical apparatus may be based on an *a priori* assumption that the Jesus of history could not have been what the documents describe him to be; therefore, it has to be myth. Thus, naturalistic explanations of Jesus' miracles were part of the *Quest's* standard operating procedure.[179] There are also a number of questions about the criteria used to distinguish authentic sayings of Jesus from the non-authentic and to distinguish authentic writings from copyists (such as the principle of dissimilarity).[180] Further questions arise, such as whether Bultmann's definition of myth makes any sense compared to the way it is commonly used in the study of history of religions.[181] These questions must be left to the books and journal articles that specifically address them.[182]

This dissertation holds that although the traditional view has difficulties which must be addressed, these difficulties have reasonable answers.[183] A minimalist approach to the defense of the integrity of Scripture entails a methodology for resolving apparent discrepancies. The reader may not always have THE answer, but AN answer can be given to avoid contradiction. The dissertation's position is that the

---

[178]G. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980):243-271.

[179]Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968):28, 50-57. [first German edition, 1906]

[180]For example, Oden 109-120 and Hagner 73-91.

[181]See Mickelson 68-73.

[182]For conservative responses to some of the implications of liberal theology on the study of Jesus, see Gregory A. Boyd, Cynic, Sage, or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1995); Gary R. Habermas, The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ (Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1996); Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds. Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

[183]There are several works that address issues in individual sections of the Bible. For example, see Craig Blomberg, The Historical Reliability of the Gospels (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1987).

traditional view fits the evidence better than other views (critical methodologies, non-historical approach, et al.) which necessitate assumptions that render them less viable. If the traditional view is correct, then whatever the Bible says about animal *telos* has significance in a different way than if the symbolic view is correct. The information is more direct, more specific, and is less open to revision.

On the other hand, if so many sections of the Bible are symbolic or mythical, then a broad range of interpretation is open to the reader to apply to issues like animal *telos*. Further, if the sayings normally attributed to Jesus were never said by him, then establishing which statements were and were not his becomes problematic. For instance, did he really say, "You are of more value than birds" or not? The ramifications of this approach versus the traditional view are momentous, but this paper cannot realistically set out to resolve all of those questions.

That means that if someone from the liberal camp condemns using animals as burden bearers as immoral because it is treating animals as instruments for human pleasure, or because they are persons, or because they have some type of intrinsic rights that mitigate against that practice, the conservative will respond, "But how can you say that? God authorizes this use of animals. It says so in the Bible."

This underlying idealogical rift is one reason why conservatives and liberals will differ over specific matters such as the significance of texts like Genesis chapter one and Genesis chapter nine. Since vegetarianism seems to be the rule in Genesis chapter one, the liberal could emphasize that particular text whereas the conservative, holding a different understanding of what the Bible is, could emphasize chapter nine. For the conservative, the Bible is an accurate record of a progressive stream of events which build to a climax. It does not do to leave a late point in the progression and regress to the beginning. In this paradigm, vegetarianism seems to have been the order in the Garden of Eden. But after much time had passed under the harsh realities of the

ground having been cursed (Genesis 3) and the other punishments which had been meted out, and after the great flood, God himself (according to the text in Genesis chapter nine) said that it is acceptable to eat meat. Chapter nine is the update. At that point in time, Genesis chapter one is history.

However, if someone denies any factual significance to Eden and grants only a superficial connection (via a redactor) between it and later Bible stories, why consider Edenic vegetarianism superior to meat eating, textually speaking? For the liberal, the Bible is full of different ideas of different people over the centuries and there seems to be no legitimate reason to pick one over the other and say that it is "The" correct view. People must use common sense and their own awareness of right and wrong when they dig through the various and often contradictory statements in the Bible and find those that more accurately reflect moral reality today, rather than the culturally bound traditions of other times and places.

So, do non-traditional thinkers really submit to a type of biblical authority, or do they claim authority over the text by recognizing authority only in the texts where their prior beliefs are stated? Is the traditional thinker applying legitimate hermeneutical principles to the biblical text, or is their approach only a naive exercise in futility, attempting to deify an old book by imposing previously held beliefs onto the text? Or, are the traditional view and the non-traditional view simply so far apart that within the confines of each paradigm it makes perfect sense to treat these texts like that? But the conservative condemns the liberal use of these particular texts based on the conservative paradigm and the liberal condemns the conservative use of these particular texts based on the liberal paradigm. Maybe the most useful method of debate would be to discuss the more rudimentary tenets of the positions, i.e., question the paradigm itself rather than simply the issue of the moment. Or, if there is common ground between the two paradigms, work from there.

Another tack is for either side to press the opposition from within the opposition's own frame of reference. But when each side, loaded with what they claim are carefully conceived presuppositions, criticize one of the other side's positions (as on animal *telos*), the criticism often comes out saying no more than, "Your belief on this matter does not make fit in with my frame of reference." That only means that the discussion will go nowhere because within the opponent's frame of reference, the attacked position could make perfect sense. For example, a liberal could respond to conservatives by either (1) presenting biblical texts which contradict their views, (2) proving that they are using biblical statements without considering their contexts, or (3) attacking more fundamental paradigmatic concepts like their view of biblical inspiration, showing that the Bible is not actually the literal word of God as they think it is.

Historiography might also play a significant role in the dialogue. By appealing to factual history (including extra-biblical documents), maybe both sides could agree that Jewish people did in fact have certain philosophies about animal *telos* (and perhaps they still do based on their forefathers' views). Before the normative questions are asked, at least they could agree on the facts.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

As time passed and non-traditional theology evolved, it manifested a diminished appreciation for the role of factual history in the Bible (as evidenced in the "Jesus of history" or "Christ of faith" discussion) as well as an enhanced appreciation for the literary import of the narratives *qua* stories. These changes resulted in a sharper distinction between two types of truths - factual truth and religious truth. Whereas traditional thinkers continued to emphasize the factual (empirical) nature of the historical narratives in the Bible, non-traditionalists came to believe that whether the narratives actually happened in history was a side issue and relatively

unimportant. For these thinkers, the emphasis was on the religious history that the narratives conveyed. There are problems with this view, a few of which resemble the weaknesses of the mythological views discussed earlier in this chapter.[184] But that is another lengthy discussion.

Some of the non-traditionalists said that even if the biblical narratives could be proven to be factual accounts of space-time events, that accomplishes little or nothing as far as proving the "religious truths" of the Bible. The question is, "Does factual history imply religious history?" For example, if the basic elements of the narratives about Abraham (his behavior, statements, travels, and such) were factual, would the religious elements of the story (like the claims that he actually heard God's voice or otherwise received messages directly from God) have to be true as well?[185] Some do not think there is a necessary link between the two. But if there is a link, what is its nature? Do the brute facts[186] of archaeology logically entail the imposition of God, angels, claims of inspiration, or other supernatural elements into the story?

**Sometimes Religious Truth Is the Best Explanation of Facts**

First, as the core of this chapter proves, people's presuppositions will profoundly affect how readily they accept or reject a given line of reasoning. Presuppositions can either facilitate or limit a person's willingness to accept a position, even when the position they might reject is the truth. Locke illustrates this in the "Probability" section of the Essay, where he discusses the King of Siam

---

[184]See critiques of Narrative Theology and related views in Osborne 164-168; Donald G. Bloesch, Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, & Interpre-tation (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994):210 ff.; and V. Philips Long "The Art of Biblical History" in Foundations of Contemporary Interpre-tation, Moises Silva, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

[185]There are other ways in which terms like "religious truth"are used in the literature. For example, John Crossan says that the resurrection of Jesus had nothing to do with his corpse. The resurrection of Christ was a *religious* truth, viz., a metaphor for a feeling of "the empowering presence of Christ" in a person's life. See Paul Copan 47.

[186]One is aware, of course, that whether brute facts exist at all is a controversial topic for some philosophers.

(4.15.5). The King questioned a visiting Dutch ambassador about Holland. The ambassador told the king that when it got extremely cold in Holland, the water became hard enough for an elephant to walk on. The king, unfamiliar with ice and its characteristics, had believed the ambassador until he began describing things that violated what the king had experienced. In that situation, the king's lack of information limited his capacity to accept the truth. An unwillingness to change his frame of reference and accept new information which he had not experienced firsthand, led him into an epistemological brick wall.

Brown says,

> Both the decision to accept as historical the events we call miracles and the decision to reject them are decisions that cannot be separated from the world view that we bring to their consideration. They stand or fall, not as isolated events, but in conjunction with the world view in which we locate them.[187]

The same statement could also be made about supernatural events other than miracle claims. But since the inclusion of the supernatural involves accepting or rejecting a major paradigm shift one way or the other in the way a person views what is possible in the universe, this can be a big obstacle in a religious epistemology such as the one offered in this chapter. As Richard Purtill puts it,

> It is sometimes claimed that historians simply as historians regard Old and New Testament history as unreliable on some independent historical grounds. But actually the situation is far more complex than this. Many events which are regarded as firmly established historically have far less documentary evidence than many biblical events, and the documents on which historians rely for much secular history are written much longer after the event than many records of biblical events. Furthermore we have many more copies of biblical narratives than of secular histories, and the surviving copies are much earlier than those on which our evidence for secular history is based. If the biblical narratives did not contain accounts of miraculous events or have reference, to God, angels, etc., biblical history would probably be regarded as much more firmly established than most of the history of, say, Classical Greece and Rome. But because the biblical accounts do mention miracles and do involve reference to God, to angels and demons, etc., considerations other than purely historical ones come into the picture. Some historians are convinced as part of their

---

[187]Brown 183.

> general world-view that miracles don't happen and that there is no spiritual world . . . Thus whether biblical history is good history is not merely a technical question.[188]

The belief or nonbelief in the miraculous will be facilitated or limited by a person's prior worldview. It does not seem proper to discount automatically the entire book out of hand solely because part of its record involves supernatural events along with the historical. An antisupernatural bias seems to be no more productive than an antinatural bias. It seems more reasonable to begin by investigating what is checkable and proceed from there to question the supernatural. Therefore, to a great extent, this discussion will always boil down to testing an idea against one's presuppositions and perhaps testing the presuppositions themselves. C. S. Lewis gives a good example of this when he says,

> In all my life I have met only one person who claims to have seen a ghost. And the interesting thing about the story is that that person disbelieved in the immortal soul before she saw the ghost and still disbelieves after seeing it. She says that what she saw must have been an illusion or a trick of the nerves. And obviously she may be right. Seeing is not believing. For this reason, the question whether miracles occur can never be answered simply by experience.[189]

To speak of inspired people or raising the dead means one kind of thing to some people, another to others. For example, Jarl Fossum says that "It can be asserted that Jesus really did raise the girl from the dead -- which would only reflect fundamentalist naiveté."[190] Crossan holds a comparable belief when he says, "I do not think that anyone, anywhere, at any time brings dead people back to life."[191] In other words, some paradigms like philosophical naturalism immediately rule out such miracles, necessitating a different interpretation of those alleged events. However, change the paradigm, and perhaps other possibilities arise. Brown comments,

---

[188]Richard L. Purtill, Thinking About Religion: A Philosophical Introduction to Religion (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978):84-85.

[189]C. S. Lewis, Miracles: A Preliminary Study (London: Fontana Books, 1960):7.

[190]Jarl Fossum, "Understanding Jesus' Miracles," Bible Review, 10:2 (April 1994):50.

[191]John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography 95.

> The issue then becomes one of how well the interpretation fits the wider body of overall accepted ideas . . . It is rather a matter of asking how the testimony to miracles fits our overall view of reality . . . we have to recognize a reciprocal relationship between our view of the stories themselves and our wider view of reality. It has now become commonplace in philosophy to observe that all facts are theory-laden.[192]

Thus, although not everyone who saw the miracles of Jesus and the apostles quickly acquiesced that it was a sign of God's power, they did agree that it was a supernatural event and sought supernatural explanations for them.[193] All agreed that something wonderful had happened, they just disagreed about the causal agent. Thus, the Pharisees did not deny that Jesus had worked wonders. They just attributed them to the Devil. Their paradigm could only accommodate one conclusion.

Jesus had reasonable responses, however, that should have made them question their position on his miracles and perhaps even their larger paradigm. He said that their sons had claimed to cast out demons by the power of God. After all, why would the Devil cast out his minions from doing his work? A house divided against itself cannot stand. It seems that the Pharisees had some faults in their paradigm which led to incorrect inferences.

Jesus did not perform another miracle to convince them. He used their Scriptures and proper reasoning (appeals to theology and philosophy) to convert them from the error of their way, and in a sense, to convert their frame of reference. He addressed their faults on other occasions, trying to shake them from their traditions, so they might rethink their mindset. The miracle itself was not enough to convince them as long as their presuppositions remained firm.

In other cases, people of different presuppositions had different interpretations of events. But that is the way this works. Some people hear God's voice and others

---

[192]Brown 284.

[193]Matthew 12:22-32. See also Acts 4:13-22 where some community leaders knew the sign was from God but had ulterior motives for not admitting it.

hear thunder.[194] Some look at the world and see matter while others see ideas. Some hear The Rachmaninoff Vespers and are entranced while others hear so much racket. A theistic universe allows miracles to be possible. An atheistic universe does not. Some people watch the televangelists heal people through the Holy Spirit of God. Some people see a production being staged.[195] Some watch professional wrestling and see sportsmen at work. Others see a staged entertainment event. There are fundamental philosophical differences between these groups that cannot always be worked out without some work at deeper levels. That means that this is not a purely theological problem. It is epistemological. If someone looks at the sun and denies that it is there, should the respondent address the physical attributes of the sun, or should she address something at a deeper level which determines the nature of a person's questions about the sun's existence?

We do this all of the time. If someone says that they see pink elephants in a room, they are considered unstable or perhaps in the midst of a psychological event. If someone claims to be Napolean, there seems to be something evidentially available, something more than simply presuppositional systems. His claim can be disproven. As colored as some facts my be, it does seem that facts exist. When someone says that such a fact is not evident, there is said to be something "wrong" with this person. When five people witness a car wreck and they all have significantly different stories of what happened, they nevertheless agree on particular features. There was a wreck. It was not an intersteller explosion. It involved cars. Damage was done. Human beings were in the vehicles.

---

[194]John 12:27-30

[195]There are ways to tell whether some categories of miracle claims are true or false. For example, when Peter Popov seemed to be hearing God telling him about audience members, James Randi and others found that Popov's wife was backstage reading information to him which she had gathered beforehand. Popov had a small radio receiver in his ear. Therefore, that particular miracle was a fake.

Therefore, because there is a lot of subjectivity to perception does not condemn humanity to an infinite number of individual universes on one planet. There are kernels of truth which are objective and which will be denied only by someone who has a deficiency of some type. Of course, reams of paper are printed on how to establish the nature of tests of deficiency. But ask people to stand in front of a moving train, to drink bleach, to put their hands into the fire, to feed ground glass to their children, and belief in objectivity rears its head. It is not merely one's subjective presuppositions that determine these matters.

Jesus addressed this presupposition problem, in a way, when he told his disciples that when they preach the gospel to others, it is like a farmer broadcasting seeds. The seeds contact different types of soil. Some soil readily receives it and it grows, some readily receives it and it dies, and some does not receive it at all.[196] Jesus likens the receptivity of the soil to the condition of peoples' minds and hearts. People have different reactions to the message because they have different backgrounds, paradigms, worldviews, desires, motivations, cares, priorities, and on and on it goes. Human beings are not simplistic robots that see truth and always accept it. Rather, they can quickly accept falsehoods on some issues and just as quickly accept truths on other issues, and do all of this for very different reasons, depending on their situations.

A lot of what both liberal and conservative Jews and Christians believe today is neither empirically recoverable nor provable. Then again, a lot of what historians, archaeologists, scientists, and psychologists believe today is not subject to empirical proof either. This dissertation holds the view that the traditional approach to the Bible yields reasonable conclusions. It is not simply an irrational, naive position as it is sometimes characterized. It is reasonable to believe that God exists, that he has revealed a message to his creatures, that the Bible is a record of the basics of that

---

[196]Luke 8:4-15

message, that God performed supernatural events in the presence of witnesses, that some of those witnesses left accurate records of those events, and so on.

In other words, in a theistic universe, together with the historical heritage of Judaism and Christianity, combined with reasonable eyewitnesses who literally lost their heads rather than denying what they claim to have seen, and a chain of historical writings which for the most part date back very near the time and place of the events themselves, this type of argument results in what some writers call an "antecedent probability" for such things to occur, as they are in keeping with the events preceding and surrounding them.[197]

Do the factual probabilities force, i.e., necessitate metaphysical worldviews? No. Due to the nature of free moral agency, human capacity for misunderstanding, etc., no one can be forced to infer a given metaphysic based on factual probabilities, although there do seem to be only a finite number of ways that factual probabilities can be explained and coordinated. This is why so many metaphysicians must attack a competing view by testing its inner logic rather than comparing it to what some call brute facts. But there are a number of paradigms within which certain metaphysical claims are not only justified, but are necessitated by the facts as understood within a paradigm.

Although the line of argumentation in this chapter tries to present a series of reasonably grounded, associated presuppositions, and makes inferences from them, accepting these does not have to be characterized as a Kierkegaardian leap of faith.[198] As Blomberg shows, there are different kinds of leaps. Some must cross a huge

---

[197]Brown 139.

[198]In some ways, this line of reasoning carries many of the same difficulties as the First Cause arguments, since it infers the supernatural as an explanation. But a First Cause argument is not necessarily considered a leap of faith so much as it is thought of as an inference.

expanse, some have no good reason for making the effort, but others cover less ground and are much more reasonable.

**The Overlap of Empirical History and Religious History**

A second consideration of the view that sometimes facts imply religious truth is that in the traditional view, there is a sense in which the factual (i.e., empirical) history in the Bible is religious history. Traditional thinkers not only believe that the narrative events (empirical facts such as Sarah giving birth to a baby when she was past the age of childbearing) really happened, but they further believe that these empirical events instantiate particular acts and pronouncements of God in history. That is, it was through the power of God that Sarah was enabled to bear a child so late in life. The empirical nature of the realism makes it history, and the involvement of God makes it religious, thus the name "religious history." The Bible, therefore, is a record of religious (metaphysically related) events occurring in the world in close relation with factual (empirical) history. God actually divided the Red Sea. The Red Sea was divided (an empirical type of history) by God's power (the metaphysical aspect of the history). Jesus literally walked on water. Jesus appeared to be walking on the top of the sea (empirical notions) and this was because of his divine power (metaphysical). In the traditional view, there is a philosophical distinction between religious (metaphysical, spiritual) history and factual (empirical events) history, but the two are intimately conjoined because of the very nature of the Bible story. If a supernatural, metaphysical being (God) crosses paths with physical, natural, empirical places and people, there must be some interesting juxtapositions of the empirical and the metaphysical. But how a person then should try to connect the two in an argument, reasoning from one to the other, becomes a difficult question. One outgrowth of this question has to do with the meaning of biblical faith. If any evidence at all is required to establish faith (which fideists deny), at what point does the

empirical and logical evidence lead to the metaphysical assurance that the biblical claims are true?

Francis Schaeffer uses an effective illustration to illuminate the meaning of biblical faith, to show the reasonableness of drawing metaphysical inferences from empirical data, and the irrationality of making big commitments based on sheer hope.[199] "Suppose we are climbing in the Alps and are very high on the bare rock and suddenly the fog shuts down." The climbing party is stranded on a shoulder of the mountain with no hope of escape. Layers of ice form and the group huddles together for warmth. One person asks the guide, "Suppose I dropped and hit a ledge ten feet down in the fog." The guide says that if there were such a ledge, and if he dropped onto it, he might live. With neither information about a ledge, nor reason to think it is safe to try dropping down to it, the person hangs from the shoulder and drops to complete uncertainty. This is the "leap of faith" so often discussed in the religious world, i.e., the practice of drawing metaphysical inferences with no basis for doing so.

But what if the group hears a voice from the fog saying, "You cannot see me, but I know exactly where you are from your voices. I am on another ridge." This voice says that he has lived in these mountains for sixty years and knows every foot of them. He further says that there is a ledge of safety just ten feet below them. If they would hang from the shoulder and drop, they would be all right.

Schaeffer says that he would not hang and drop right away. He would ask the voice enough questions to satisfy himself that the voice was legitimate. For example, does the owner of the voice have a name that is common in the Alps? Time is short, however, so when he is satisfied he would hang and drop.

---

[199]Francis Schaeffer, He Is There and He Is Not Silent (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972):99-100.

> This is faith, but obviously it has no relationship to the first instance. As a matter of fact, if one of these is called faith, the other should not be designated by the same word symbol.[200]

Though particular sets of empirical facts do not force everyone to accept a specific metaphysical conclusion, given sets of facts do seem to make possible only a limited number of metaphysical possibilities, and an even smaller number of best explanations. Therefore, there is a relationship between the two such that empirical facts and faith (a metaphysical conclusion) need not be mutually exclusive, although in any one person's mind, they might not have a necessary relationship either. Faith does not have to be the blind leap in the dark caricature that some have presented it to be.

## DICHOTOMY OF PHYSICAL AND METAPHYSICAL EVENTS

Third, that said, there is an intrinsic distinction between the nature of some acts or experiences. Some experiences are purely physical in nature and some are metaphysical (intellectual, conceptual, valuational, spiritual) in nature. Building an altar is a physical experience and results in a physical artifact. It leaves a type of fingerprint on the physical world. Even if a man claims to have caught a large fish that got away, he might not have a physical artifact as proof of the event, but at least he is talking about an action that can be considered in light of physical circumstances which are measurable within the laws of physics.

For example, if he claims to have caught a four hundred foot catfish out of a small pond, based on the laws of physics involved it is not a very likely story. But if he says that he caught a three pound catfish and it got away, even though it involves empirical facticity, how can it be proven or disproven? On the other hand, if a woman is lying in her bed one night and thinks she sees Jesus on the cross at the foot of her bed, this is a different type of experience and a different type of claim. It is not just

---

[200]Ibid.

about physicality and its inherent limitations. It deals with the metaphysical. In this case there is no aforementioned overlapping of the empirical world and the metaphysical experience. How can this claim be proven or disproven? Maybe a reliablist stance is acceptable to a point; accept her word for it unless there are good reasons to reject it. General principles of credulity also apply. Does she exhibit irrational behavior? Is she generally of sound mind? Does she have a history of strange visions? Of course, as noted earlier, if it can be shown that she experiences frequent hallucinations, it would count heavily against the reality of her experience of Jesus.

Accordingly, different kinds of claims can dictate appropriately different kinds of tests or proofs. Geographical questions do not find answers in metaphysics. Metaphysical questions do not find answers in archaeology. That being the case, "Can a modern reader know absolutely that God spoke to people (like Adam, Noah, Abram, Paul, Peter, et al.) in the way the biblical texts claim?" A claim made within the realm of factual history is one thing, but this is a claim of revelation.[201] How would a person go about proving that God actually spoke to Paul or Abraham as the Bible claims? Perhaps it would be as difficult to prove that Paul or Abraham mistook psychological events as the voice of God. Indeed, how did Abraham and the others know that it was God at all? For the non-traditional group, this might not be a very important question. Their interpretations would likely remain intact whether there is proof for either view. But for the traditional group, it is important because they think that it is not only true in a metaphorical sense that Paul and Abraham heard God's voice, but it actually happened the way the Bible said that it did.

---

[201]This once again broaches the more general question of verification addressed earlier in this chapter. That is, what does it take to prove a given kind of claim?

Those who hold the traditional view of the Bible often bolster their position by pointing to the many cases in which archaeologists have located places, people, dates, names, and so on, corroborates what the Bible says in the historical narratives. But what artifact could an archaeologist uncover that would prove that someone saw an angel on occasion or perhaps heard God's voice? For that matter, turn the question around; what artifact would prove that someone mistook a psychological event for the voice of God or perhaps even lied about hearing the voice?[202] Carl Henry agrees with Barth on this matter, for he says, "ordinary methods of historical research" cannot "adjudicate with certainty the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a revelational event."[203] An archaeologist could find the city of Jericho and could even discover that the walls of Jericho fell. But how would one then prove that the walls had fallen because the Israelites walked around it and blew the trumpets and that they did it because God had so directed them (as the Bible says)? Where is the logical connection between the empirical part of biblical history and the metaphysical inferences?

In this sense, some of the religious experiences (such as God telling the Israelites to walk around the city of Jericho) transcend the ability of empirical evidence either to replicate or validate. Cases like these are ephemeral, fleeting occasions in the same way that all conversations between human beings and all historical events are unique and non-repeatable. Of course, the distinction that troubles this particular circumstance is that if the Bible is factually accurate, it is claiming that certain people had a conversation with God and that claim injects a supernatural element. In these situations, how can a modern reader arrive at any degree of assurance that the "religious experiences" occurred? The corollary question must raised as well. How

---

[202]It is one thing to say that Abraham wrongly claimed that God spoke to him. It is another to say that Jim Jones made the same claim. Jones' lifestyle (or in Jesus' words, his "fruits") and teachings which contradict biblical texts immediately call his claims into question.

[203]Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority vol. II "God Who Speaks and Shows" (Waco: Word Books, 1979):287.

can a modern reader have any assurance that any event, any conversation, any action in the Bible occurred?

Aside from the previous section of this chapter that dealt with the Bible's historicity e.g., the traditional view holds that the best explanation of some sets of empirical facts is that God must have acted on the world in some supernatural way, it seems that to some extent, the modern reader is left with the same situation that the judicial system often encounters: in the absence of empirical facts, the best evidence that exists in some cases is the testimony of those involved in the events, e.g., first person accounts, eyewitnesses in various degrees of association to the event, and maybe even the physical limitations of the situation in which they occur. There are collateral considerations that must be made as well, such as the alleged event's historical setting, its background and foreground, the number and character of the religious experience(s) in question, the number and character of the event's witnesses, the nature of the testimony, the makeup of the religious context in which it occurs, and other inclining or disinclining factors. A large part of the endeavor necessitates an evaluation of the witnesses.

For instance, the early church was convinced of the miracles of the Old Testament, Jesus, and the apostles. Questions arise. Was their belief well founded? Should the modern reader trust the apostles and witnesses? How likely is it that the overall string of witnesses was somehow deluded or deceived?

Eyewitness testimony must be questioned. Even with generally reliable people, eyewitness testimony can be unreliable depending on the situation. Was the witness at a good angle to see the event in question? Were weather conditions good? Was the person they witnessed doing something that was inherently deceitful (like a magic trick or a scam of some kind)? What about the witnesses themselves? Are they credible, competent, reliable, trustworthy, in a position to know what happened in the

situations for which they are witnesses, biased in such a way that they would bend or violate the truth in order to achieve an ulterior end, innocent embellishers, deceived, or ignorant? Whereas these are important questions, the judicial system continues to highly value witnesses. Almost everyone does. Testimony of people in religious circumstances should not be completely discounted solely because religious experiences are involved (disregarding a bias against the possibility of such things occurring). However, even the witnesses will naturally have observed the situation out of a system of beliefs which, in a sense, interpret the circumstances.

Therefore, when the apostle Paul says that God revealed things to him, even if the claim is true, no one could have crawled inside the claimant's head and experienced the religious moment that he described, much less could someone do it today. Since it is a metaphysical claim, there seems to be no physical evidence available to prove it. Paul believed it apparently because he had a unique experience on the road to Damascus, an experience which changed his mind about some important matters. He obeyed the vision and found that it was verified when he got to his destination. The miracles that accompanied his preaching apparently were a source of constant verification that the revelations which he believed were from God, really were.[204] The new empirical facts confirmed the inferences he had drawn from the previous facts.

But how does Paul prove his claim to others? People knew him, experienced his preaching and power, and yet when troublemakers tried to turn Paul's converts against him, Paul wrote to them and reminded them of the reasons they accepted his message in the first place (the bulk of 2 Corinthians is about this very thing).

In cases like this, veridical requirements might need to focus on the claimant himself or herself and on the environment in which the said event is claimed to have occurred. Paul combined his various experiences (witnessing fulfilled prophecy,

---

[204] 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 1:10-24; Ephesians 3:3-4

visions, revelations, miracles) and concluded that God was speaking through him when he preached and wrote. Many of the people who met or read after him apparently agreed. Even if modern readers do not believe Paul's claims, they could agree that Paul's experiences led *him* to interpret the experiences a certain way. Readers could begin from there and examine rationally the metaphysical system that Paul used. If it stands up, maybe they could work their way back to his experiences and decide how reasonable it is to accept the experiences as he did.

Many times, biblical prophets say, "the word of the LORD came unto me" but they do not describe the experience for the reader. Did they hear a voice? Was it a totally unique feeling of some kind? They offer no description. Sometimes the Bible says that there were dreams, visions, voices, but does not carefully explicate those experiences. If God spoke in the same manner to a philosophical naturalist, would the recipient accept it as God's revelation or would she merely chalk it up to a psychotic event? Apparently, modern televangelists hear their own thought patterns and interpret them as divine messages. If so, the power of presuppositions appears again.

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, there were times when someone "heard God" but wanted evidence that it was indeed God speaking to them. When Jeremiah encountered the fulfillment of God's prediction, he said, "Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord" (32:8). God also showed Moses signs as evidence (burning bush, hand turned leprous and clean, rod turned to serpent). So, some of the people who received revelations were not *absolutely* sure of it until they had some sort of extramental, empirical assurance.

Lest some think that the inferential relationship of empirical facts and metaphysics is unique in its requirements, consider what a historian must do to prove a more empirical type of claim, e.g., that Washington crossed the Delaware. No one today has direct access to those events. But it seems to be a reasonable conclusion

based on the big picture of what was going on in the world at that time. Yet, how does a modern reader know what *was* going on in the world at that time? There are a number of physical artifacts that lend credence to such events, but what of the event itself? What type of artifact could an archaeologist unearth that would unequivocally prove that Washington stepped into a boat that went from one shore to the other? Even if the boat existed today, its existence and condition do not have the capacity of informing the archaeologist where it has been and who has be in it. The historical process seems to boil down to things like the number and nature of witnesses, the nature of the event itself, the background and foreground, etc., much like the case of the biblical accounts.

But, the Bible's inclusion of supernatural elements appears to raise the bar on how much proof is needed before the modern reader is justified in accepting the accounts as true. Modern sceptics often say that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. But assume for a moment that the apostle Paul really heard God's voice as the New Testament accounts propose. Would it be beyond proof, something that is forever lost to history? What kind of evidence would prove it? Why would it have to be extraordinary? What would constitute EXTRA-ordinary proof? If something occurs in reality, then what type of special marks must it leave on the universe if it is a miraculous act in addition to the marks that a natural act would leave?

Compare the answer to that question with the next one. What kind of proof does the modern reader have that it happened as the New Testament accounts propose? Unless a person's worldview holds that supernatural events cannot occur under any circumstances whatsoever, the supernatural elements involved in Paul's story should not automatically downgrade the story. The thing to remember is that with or without the supernatural elements, to some extent, the proof will be composed of eyewitness testimony as in the case of Washington and the Delaware.

Of course, someone could say that the more empirical events like Jesus walking on water or Washington crossing the Delaware are at least potentially, theoretically, empirically checkable (reminiscent of the logical positivists' verification principle) because they have to do with physical nature. The nature of water in its liquid state disallows walking on it, but allows a boat to float on it. But this does not really bring a person closer to establishing the truth or falsehood of empirical claims than it does in the case of metaphysical claims if the possibility of miracles is allowed. It might only be saying that they are two different types of occurrences, physical and metaphysical. A miracle claim or a revelation claim are claims about abnormal occurrences, but that in itself does not mean that it is either impossible or unproveable. A person might feel more at ease when considering a purely empirical claim because it could be repeatable in many situations, whereas miracle claims are not regular occurrences by their very nature. That is part of what makes them miracles, viz., their dramatic shifting of normality. Yet, both empirical claims and metaphysical claims come to the modern reader via eyewitnesses as well as second and third hand witnesses.[205]

Therefore, there is no direct way to prove that Jesus walked on the water or that God spoke to someone in the way the Bible claims. There are verbal and written eyewitnesses accounts to some religious events, as well as accounts by the next generation of believers who knew the eyewitnesses, and a number of other considerations. As Colin Brown says,

> In the case of the miracles reported in the Gospels we have to acknowledge that they are *reports*. They are not events to which we have direct access . . . we have no direct access to the people involved. We cannot cross-check their stories with outside sources, or examine the previous and subsequent case histories of those who were healed.[206]

---

[205]Of course, some conservatives think that the Holy Spirit inspired some of the Bible writers and thus gave direct information about those matters. In that case, this is not just about witnesses as commonly understood.

[206]Colin Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984):283.

A similar situation exists with the biblical claims that people heard God's voice or experienced a visit from an angel. There is no way, short of traveling back in time, of conclusively proving the literal truth of those claims. However, there are other types of related evidences similar to circumstantial evidence presented in a courtroom. For example, one can check the general accuracy of the Bible in areas like chronology, geography, topography, cultural specificity, and other fields then compare its content to other religious accounts of mythology, morality, concepts of God and humanity, etc. If it passes the tests on matters which are checkable, does that say nothing at all about the matters on which it is not checkable? There can even be internal examinations of the nature of biblical literary genres, prophecies, internal consistency of accounts, and similar affiliated information. This may on the surface appear to be an irrational stretch for some who hold a naturalistic worldview or non-traditionalistic understanding of the Bible. But consider Craig Blomberg's observation.

> One cannot give historical evidence to support all of the details about the person and work of Jesus recorded in the canonical Gospels. Nevertheless, the historical evidence that is available supports the presumption of at least the general trust-worthiness of particularly the Synoptic tradition. When sources repeatedly prove trustworthy where they can be tested, they should be given the benefit of the doubt where they cannot. This is what is frequently referred to as placing the burden of proof on the skeptic when it comes to Gospel historicity. Kierkegaard is quite correct in saying that there is ultimately a leap of faith that goes beyond what historical evidence can demonstrate. But contra Kierkegaard, it is not an absurd leap . . . Historical evidence moves us a long way towards demonstrating our belief; as a result, the faith that is necessary to fill in the remaining gap is reasonable.[207]

Therefore, in the Bible there is an overlap between factual (empirical) history and religious history. If a metaphysical God imposed himself on a physical world at certain points in history and in some ways affected people, places, and events, then there are intersecting vectors of space/time and metaphysics, a crossing of paths. If a

---

[207]Craig L. Blomberg, "The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith: Harmony or Conflict?" in Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan Paul Copan, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998):114-115.

person has journeyed through layers of information which has led her to a worldview that includes the existence of a God who has done such things, then she might be ready to accept an empty tomb as an empirical fact brought about by God's having acted in the past. In her mind, God might be the only proper explanation.

But epistemologically speaking, do empirical facts, "brute" facts intrinsically entrap the minds of everyone who sees them and necessitate metaphysical conclusions? Apparently not. To what particular metaphysical conclusion a set of empirical facts points depends on the thinker's own presuppositional framework and attitudes. If that is the case, then it is also the case that no set of empirical facts absolutely convinces everyone of a particular metaphysical conclusion, such as religious history. But particular combinations of facts can make a particular religious history more reasonable within given paradigms, i.e., certain groupings of facts can help to narrow the gap between the empirical and the metaphysical.[208] Within a given framework, a set of facts can be very compelling. Remember, if it can be proven that the woman often has hallucinations or perhaps that she is in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's disease, it is *more likely* that her metaphysical vision was only a trick of the mind. As Dewey Beegle says,

> Faith is not being blindfolded, spun around a number of times, and challenged to leap . . . Without criteria of differentiation, faith in the Golden Tablets of Joseph Smith is just as valid as trust in the New Testament accounts about Jesus Christ.[209]

Conservatives think that some empirical facts provide an objective foothold that makes some religious claims more or less worthy of acceptance. Thus, for those who hold the traditional view it is important to emphasize the empirical historicity of

---

[208]Let it be said again, paradigms are not deterministically static. A person's worldview can change.

[209]Dewey Beegle, Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility (Ann Arbor: P. Pettengill, 1979):62ff.

the Bible as a piece of the entire puzzle that provides a frame of reference in which religious claims are more readily accepted.

For example, to use an earlier illustration, if the Bible says that God caused the walls of Jericho to fall outward, and if archaeologists discover that the walls of Jericho fell outward, then at least there is the commonality between the Bible and empirical facts that the wall fell outward. Then if a biblical prophet says that God's Spirit has enabled him to see a future event in which Tyre would be destroyed in a certain way, and archaeologists discover empirical facts that Tyre was in fact destroyed in that certain way over two hundred years later, at least the Bible and empirical facts agree on that. It seems that when dozens of these parallels are compiled, the empirical facts eventually culminate to form a good stepping stone in the direction of inferring the metaphysical belief that God was involved in those events. In other words, they comprise a paradigm in which such an inference becomes more reasonable.

## THE QUESTION OF HERMENEUTICS

Many more presuppositional questions divide those who write about animal *telos* and the Bible. The space limitations of this chapter make impossible a lengthy discussion of any one of several important questions, and work against even brief discussion of very many of them. However, one more question must not be overlooked -- hermeneutics. In a way, all of the questions discussed in this chapter ultimately lead to this one. Some assumptions about and treatments of this issue have already been essential in order to make the observations in the previous portions of this chapter. This project only entails one philosophical interpretation of the biblical data, and its corollary critiques of some of the alternate approaches.

The word "hermeneutics" (from the messenger Hermes) has to do with interpretation. Hermeneutics usually involves the study of principles or rules that assist readers in interpreting texts, i.e., discovering their meaning; but even beliefs,

experiences, and facts have to be interpreted within the boundaries of some kind of prior understandings about the world. Interpretation, therefore, is a human enterprise, and both mistakes and honest differences can be manifest in it.

Why is interpretation necessary? "Who needs interpretation?" Gomes asks. "We do. It is impossible to avoid."[210] It seems that "every reader is at the same time an interpreter. That is, most of us assume as we read that we also understand what we read."[211]

As this chapter shows, a person's philosophical presuppositions have an impact upon the way he or she views the nature of the Bible and on how he or she interprets the meaning of experiences and facts. Edward Young says, "All who study the Bible must be influenced by their foundational presuppositions."[212] That is also true when it comes to deciding what the Bible *is*. It is also true of people read about in the Bible who were engaged in interpreting what they experienced and believed. But it seems especially poignant when it comes to interpreting what the Bible *says*. One of the ways in which this can be seen is in the range of positions that people take. Ruth Green says that when she read the Bible she was filled with "incredulity and horror" when she saw the "superstitious ignorance, the atrocious inhuman cruelty, the obvious derivation from mythology, and above all the depravity of Bible personalities," not to mention the "rampant sexism in the Bible . . . ."[213] Daniel Webster had a different way of looking at the Bible. He read it and thought,

> If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible our country will go on prospering, but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no

---

[210]Peter J. Gomes The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996):29.

[211]Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1982):16.

[212]Edward J. Young, Thy Word is Truth (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957).

[213]Green v-vi.

> man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury us and our glory in profound obscurity.[214]

Though someone's philosophical views will be exemplified in her interpretation of the Bible, so might her motivations. Bultmann says, "Every exegesis that is guided by dogmatic prejudices does not hear what the text says, but only lets the latter say what it wants to hear."[215] If people read the Bible looking for a certain view of animal *telos*, this motive can determine that they will find what they are looking for. Thus, when it comes to figuring out what the Bible says about anything, there is no escaping the practice of interpretation.

If it is true that "Interpretation is the fuel that drives understanding,"[216] then could a person's understanding of the Bible change in some situations? It seems so. Sometimes readers encounter ideas that lead them to reshape their previous interpretations in the light of new insights. According to Grant Osborne's "hermeneutical spiral,"[217] interpreters spiral in on the truth little by little. Bultmann uses the figure of a hermeneutical circle to describe this operation. Readers work on a text while the text is working on the readers.[218] If this activity continues, their thinking can eventually undergo a sort of Kuhnian paradigm shift, even to the point of overcoming their previous presuppositions and establishing new ones.

**Examples of Some Basic Hermeneutical Principles**

Before one can compile a set of hermeneutical principles, some of the prior questions must be answered. What is the Bible? If one holds the traditional view, then there must be rules that distinguish between historical narrative (events that actually

---

[214]George W. DeHoff, Why We Believe the Bible (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: DeHoff Publications, 1966):13.

[215]Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" in Existence in Faith J. Smogden, ed. and trans. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961, 1964): 343.

[216]Gomes 33.

[217]Grant R. Osborne The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

[218]Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" Existence and Faith (London: Collins Fontana, 1964):342-51.

occurred in the manner depicted), parables, allegories, visions, etc. There is also the interest of harmonizing different parts of the Bible with one another. But these are all very human enterprises where mistakes can be made. However, with a non-traditional view many of the historical narratives are themselves types of parables and allegories. Though harmonization would be of less concern from a non-traditional view (although it is a common practice in the study of other ancient documents which they think only one author has written), harmonizing is crucial for those holding a high view of Scripture.[219]

What are some basic hermeneutical principles? Most seem to be based on logical principles, so it seems that first, reason must enter into the interpretation process. The Bible itself encourages this. For example, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."[220] Or, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."[221] Jesus said to love God with all of the mind as well as all of the heart (Matthew 22:37). He, Paul and others use inference in their interpretations of the Old Testament.[222] An irrational approach to the biblical information does not seem philosophically satisfactory, since it would allow for almost any handling of the text. People should have good reasons for the way they treat a document. Reason enters the picture in many ways. At base, it even comes into play in deciding whether what the Bible says is true, accurate in what it depicts, and reasonable in the claims that it makes.

As mentioned earlier, when non-traditionalists point to alleged contradictions in the Bible, one must reason correctly in order to be sure that it is an actual

---

[219]Craig L. Blomberg, "The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986):135-74.

[220]2 Timothy 2:15

[221]1 Thessalonians 5:21

[222]For example, see John 10:34-35 and Romans 10:6-10.

contradiction. Or, when non-traditionalists can use reason to say that the Bible is wrong about some things, traditionalists use reason to show that it is not the case. Extra-biblical insights become very important when one reasons about the Bible. Sometimes extra-biblical information can help people reach a point where they know enough about certain issues to decide whether the Bible is correct about something, such as historical details, first century symbolism, historical context, etc.

Reason also plays a role in the effort to work out details not spelled out in the Bible. For example, do some important principles take precedence over others? Jesus said that loving God and neighbor were the most important ones.[223] He also said that some matters of the Mosaic system are weightier than others.[224] There are similar statements elsewhere in the Bible. If there should be a hierarchy for principles which are not aligned in this way, how does one establish the proper priority scale, since the Bible does not give other moral principles thorough hierarchical treatment? Some think that there seems to be a kind of hierarchy to some of the biblical principles even if the Bible does not explicitly say so. Evangelical author Norman Geisler has worked out a hierarchical system of ethics in which many of these matters are spelled out.[225] The relevant question is, how do animals fit into that hierarchy?

Although Geisler's book does not discuss animals at any length, it does discuss ecology, and that discussion is related in some ways. He quotes biblical texts that state his belief that "material creation is good" and that it "reflects God's glory." Thus, in "polluting the world men are destroying what is good and defacing the mirror that reflects God . . . Surely no higher and no better reason can be given against pollution."[226] Geisler also believes that persons are more important than things.[227]

---

[223]Matthew 22:34-40

[224]Matthew 23:23

[225]Norman L. Geisler, Ethics: Alternatives and Issues (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971):114-136.

[226]Geisler 251-252.

But persons have intrinsic value and things have instrumental value "as they are used for persons."[228] When he briefly refers to animals, he seems say that they are objects, things, according them the same status as the rest of the material world. He appears to say that people cannot sin against nature *qua* nature, but can affect nature in such a way that it wrongly affects themselves or others, and that is what makes the abuse of nature an immoral act. Geisler says,

> Even the hermit who abuses his dog or the sadist who privately torments animals sins when these acts are deleterious to himself or others. It is difficult to see how cruelty (even to animals) does not in some way affect the person who performs the cruelty.[229]

The next chapter of this dissertation contains several attempts by contemporary authors to establish a biblical argument that recognizes some value in animals apart from human beings. In light of these arguments, Geisler's view seems overly limited and thus wrong. Biblically speaking, there is a link between animal *telos* and the role animals fill in relation to human beings. But that is not the same as arguing that aside from deleterious impact on human beings, chopping up a dog is the same as chopping down a tree.

So there are hierarchical approaches to consider. Formal attempts have been made. But the Bible itself does not lay it all out layer by layer and degree by degree. That is where reason (and therefore, human fallibility and diversity of opinion) comes in, informed by an ethical system. Depending upon people's differing ethical systems, along with their views of what the Bible is and how it operates, they can come up with different hierarchies. What people think about animal *telos* in the first place, for example, will place animals on a higher or lower spot on their spectrum of priorities. Reason plays a major role in this and other aspects of hermeneutics.

---

[227]Ibid. 115.
[228]Ibid. 253.
[229]Ibid. 254.

A second important hermeneutical principle emphasizes context. The historical and literary context in which a text occurs is important. That is, the more readers know about the historical setting of a text, the better off they will be , e.g., to catch historical or metaphysical nuances (if the text contains any of these). With any document, statements should be taken to mean what they are intended to mean in the flow of communication in which they occur. Readers should also be somewhat familiar with the genre of literature they are reading. The Bible includes poetry, narrative, sermons, etc. It does a great deal more than just state the facts. Thus, when ethical inferences related to animal *telos* and value are derived from a given text, they must be justified within a conceptual paradigm.

This might not be such a crucial point for either a deconstructionist or related reader-response approaches to texts, but if a single author penned a book, and if the writer intended for readers to receive a particular message from the text, then context is very important. Context can be important even if multiple authors penned a book or a chapter. But like anything else, people can be mistaken about precisely how a context should limit an interpretation. Different understandings and uses of hermeneutics make us aware of human fallibility and should facilitate humility.

Context is important to conservatives for another reason. Carl F. H. Henry thinks that some have made a straw man of "literalism."

> Evangelical Protestants are frequently caricatured as literalists of unimaginative mentality, who treat even biblical anthropomorphisms as strict prose and are duly embarrassed if one will only recite the obviously figurative elements in the Bible.[230]

Henry has a great deal to say further on this matter, as when he states, "To imply that evangelicals are wooden-headed literalists who cannot distinguish between

---

[230]Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority vol. IV "God Who Speaks and Shows" (Waco: Word Books, 1979):103.

literary types is a resort to ridicule rather than to reason."[231] Therefore, it is important for conservative writers to point out that they are aware of the impact of context and the difference between figurative language and literal language. They might even make the argument that it is the liberal who cannot tell the difference between factual records of history and allegory.

Third, word meanings are important. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek lexicons are available to help readers understand the way words were used during the time the texts were written. If readers are using an old English translation, then they might need to use an English dictionary that gives the meanings of words from the time period of the translation, because word meanings change over time (e.g., "charity" from the King James version of 1611).

Fourth, most books about biblical hermeneutics emphasize the importance of the author's intent. Readers should try to understand what the writer was attempting to communicate. This is a classic principle, almost universally accepted prior to the advent of reader response theories of literature. However, Gomes thinks the "doctrine of original intent" is dangerous because readers might impose their own views onto the text, projecting their private interpretations of the author's original intent into the text, rather than merely forming their opinions of what the text says based on the primacy of the text itself.[232] However, it seems a good idea to make the standard of original intent the "north star" to guide a person's interpretation. It is more rational than an appeal to subjectivity like, "The Holy Spirit tells me that this text means . . . ." Fee and Stuart say that

> the only proper control for hermeneutics is to be found in the original intent of the biblical text . . . Otherwise biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean to any given reader. But such hermeneutics becomes pure subjectivity,

---

[231]Henry 109.
[232]Gomes 45.

> and who then is to say that one person's interpretation is right, and another's is wrong. Anything goes.[233]

Specific applications of a subjective approach have produced a bevy of bad results, from child abuse to mass suicide. As Fee and Stuart ask, "What is to keep one from killing one's daughter because of a foolish vow, as did Jephthah (Judges 11:29-40) . . . ?"[234]

It appears that New Testament characters believed the Old Testament texts had particular meanings. For instance, if there is any historical legitimacy to the story, Philip asked the Ethiopian Eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him." Then the Eunuch asked Philip whom the text was talking about, and Philip told him that it was about Jesus of Nazareth.[235] Conservatives believe that at times like this God made sure that Philip was correct. Particular, specific meaning was assumed by the reader and interpreter alike.[236] This is the normal approach taken by New Testament characters. It also seems that the New Testament writers intended their writings to carry very specific meanings since they condemn people for disagreeing with them.[237] If faith comes by hearing, (i.e., accepting as true what someone hears), then it seems to imply that revelation is both propositional and carries particular meanings.[238]

Thus, someone's interpretation of a text can be colored by human frailties, foibles, and the blind spots which these facilitate. However, each individual has a

---

[233]Fee and Stuart 26.
[234]Fee and Stuart 26.
[235]Acts 8:30-35
[236]Scholarly conservatives know that even biblical figures could err in what they said unless one was writing or speaking by inspiration. Conservatives generally do not believe that just because the Holy Spirit used Peter or Paul to produce certain inspired documents or to preach inspired messages from time to time that Peter or Paul was therefore always inspired in everything they said or did. For example, Paul could not remember how many he baptized in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14-16) and Peter's behavior had to be corrected (Galatians 2:11).
[237]See examples in Galatians 5:4 and 2 Peter 3:15-17.
[238]Romans 10:17

responsibility to examine her heart and mind and to the best of her ability arrive at the closest approximation of the original meaning of the text as possible.[239] This self-examination necessitates a great deal of humility, soul searching, and spiritual leveling.

Robert Stein points out that three important factors set parameters of a person's interpretation of a text: the author of the text, the text itself, and the readers of the text.[240] Emphasis on historical and literary contexts, literary genre, word meanings, and related endeavors, should help readers discover the author's intent. But the conversation always comes back to the fallible readers and the baggage that they bring to their interpretations. Sometimes, that baggage facilitates understanding of a text, and sometimes it erects barriers to understanding.

One barrier that can inhibit good interpretation is a reader's cultural setting. As noted earlier, writers like Bultmann and Niebuhr heavily emphasize the influence of the reader's environment. To that extent they limit a person's ability to know pristine truth because beliefs and interpretations are so tainted by the culture of both writer and reader.[241] Conservatives generally do not take the limitations of one's environment this far. Clearly, readers cannot help but be influenced by their culture to some extent. As Gomes says, "How can one not live in one's own time? How can one not be a part of the culture that frames one's experience?"[242] Thus, even conservative scholars somehow have to separate biblical history from biblical doctrine.[243] The more specific question is, to what extent does culture limit a person's

---

[239]Compare with biblical injunctions about this in many texts such as 2 Timothy 2:15 and Mark 7:5-13.

[240]Robert H. Stein Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994):18.

[241]H. Richard Niebuhr makes repeated references to this theme in both The Meaning of Revelation and Christ and Culture.

[242]Gomes 46.

[243]As an example of this, see Henry A. Virkler, Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981):223-228, or Mickelson 159-176.

ability to know pristine Truth?[244] This paper takes the position that although readers are limited by their cultures to some degree, through the use of proper hermeneutical principles, texts can be understood sufficiently (even if not understood completely). The cultural barrier is vincible to that degree. If this were not so, then writing a dissertation would be meaningless, as well as attempting to interpret it.

Gadamer elegantly referred to the goal of hermeneutics as a fusion of horizons. That is, people cannot completely escape their own cultural influences, so their cultural horizons and the horizons of the texts they read cannot become one. "Nevertheless the problem of historical distance and tradition should not give rise to undue pessimism."[245] Knowing more about one's own culture, and learning more about another's, can bring them closer together, working *toward* a fusion of the two. Conservatives generally seem to believe,

> that through hard work -- that is, by studying the original languages, cultures, and mind-sets of the NT writers, combined with a share of sympathy and simple common sense -- we may recreate their situation with a relatively high degree of accuracy.[246]

Therefore, the problem that conservatives have with liberals on this point is not just that writers are influenced by culture; it is a matter of degree. The problem is exacerbated when at one extreme someone overextends this argument and thinks that culture insulates someone from understanding someone else, while at the other extreme some claim infallibility for their views because they understand it perfectly.

One of the common philosophical problems regarding interpretation is when advocates of the critical method and "fundamentalists" alike use the trump card of

---

[244]Although biblical texts like those mentioned earlier admonish readers to take great care in the way they interpret religious messages, the Bible does not offer an epistemological scepticism. The fundamental message is that Truth can be known. For example, Jesus says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Consider also texts like 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Matthew 7:15, et al.

[245]Thiselton xix.

[246]L. D. Hurst, "New Testament Theological Analysis," Introducing New Testament Interpretation, Scot McKnight, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989):137.

Holy Spirit guidance. That is, the Spirit tells a person what the Bible says or means. Yet, if God himself shows a person what is true by means of the Holy Spirit working one on one with a reader, that seems a lot like a doctrine of inspiration. This raises additional questions like whether the Spirit would tell different people different things. Can the Spirit lead people to contradictory conclusions? Conservative author, J. I. Packer asserts that the Holy Spirit helps people interpret the Bible and he goes so far as to say that, "without the Spirit's help there can be no grasp of the message of Scripture . . . ."[247] However, the arch-enemy to Packer, James Barr says,

> the inward witness of the Holy Spirit might perfectly well testify, and indeed does testify, to the authority of the Bible in the lives of persons and of churches that fully accept the critical approach.[248]

This hearkens back to the discussions earlier in this chapter of subjectivity and personal experience and their relation to verification of revelation. How can people distinguish between what the Spirit tells them and what they come up with on their own?

Another important question is whether God would give a written revelation that people could not understand without miraculous help. Would he then send a miraculous sort of Revealer in order to reveal the revelation? A revelation is supposedly a revealing, an unveiling of something. It seems contradictory or somehow circular to think that God would send a revelation that is so opaque that it requires supernatural guidance to understand.

Interpreting the Bible is not a hopeless cause. Many parts of the Bible (like the Golden Rule) seem clear enough on the face of it without getting into the historicity question; but a complex maze of beliefs, assumptions, and motivations can increase the difficulty quotient immeasurably. The hermeneutical process is not as simple as

---

[247]J. I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958):112.

[248]Barr, Fundamentalism 264.

some of those who write about animal *telos* and the Bible make it appear when they publish articles that virtually say, "Here is what the Bible says about this topic." This is why in the evaluation of such positions, the philosophical and hermeneutical assumptions outlined above, which comprise a very brief introduction to the foundation of the epistemological position assumed herein, are of great importance.

**A Hermeneutical Problem: Slavery**

One issue that could arise in this study has to do with hermeneutical consistency. Namely, given the traditional view of the Bible assumed in this dissertation, if persons are justified in using animals in the ways that the Bible approves, then would they also have to accept the practice of slavery, since some people claim that both the Old Testament and the New Testament sanction it?[249] The position of this dissertation is that in the traditional view of the Bible, the Bible does sanction certain uses of animals within particular guidelines. The Bible seems to condone the eating of animals, wearing their hides, and other uses of animals as spelled out in Appendix A. But this does not justify the use of slaves. First, the practice of slavery or servitude by godly people in the Old Testament was not what is sometimes called "absolute slavery." Nor was this type of behavior condoned in the New Testament. Second, this dissertation's position is that Christians today are not amenable to the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament and thus its laws regarding servitude are not applicable *per se*.

***Definitions***

In twentieth century, post civil rights movement, hypertolerant North America, there are few terms more sociologically and emotionally disquieting than "slave" or "slavery" because of the slavery of black Africans practiced here in the

[249]This paper neither holds that every act in the Bible is sanctioned for the present day, nor that every act sanctioned at some point in the Bible story is necessarily sanctioned for the present day (e.g., animal sacrifice).

nineteenth century. Anything that smacks of that pre-civil war slavery as it is commonly thought of, is automatically condemned and rightly so. But when ancient documents written in several ancient languages use words that are translated into English as "slave" or "servant," and when these ancient words reference practices with which many modern readers are unfamiliar, care must be taken lest one fall into the mire of anachronism, attaching a particular modern referent to a word which actually described an ancient practice quite different from the one so readily attached to it three thousand years later, in a different language, in a different societal setting.

There have always been and are today many different systems and types of slavery and servitude practiced in the world. Thomas Gilby says, "The system may vary greatly according to the title of ownership . . . its permanence . . . the extent of the dominion . . . and according to the manner in which it is administered . . ." and he shows that within each of these variables, there is a spectrum of variation.[250] Because these variations result in very different forms of slavery or servitude, R. M. Hare's article on slavery in *Encyclopedia of Ethics* says, "The precise details of the status will vary from one society to another, and to that extent the term 'slave' is vague."[251] The purpose of his article is not to sort out all of the various types of slavery, but to talk about the type that is most familiar to most people, the type that so many Westerners think of and oppose. So rather than try to give either an unduly precise or an overly generalized definition of this important term, Hare settles for defining it in the better known sense.

Burton Leiser recognizes the definition problem as well, and mentions this in his article on slavery in *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*. He begins with what he

---

[250]T. Gilby, "Slavery," in Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion vol. O-Z, eds. Paul Meagher, et al. (Washington, D. C.: Corpus Publications, 1979):3321.

[251]R. M. Hare, "Slavery," in Encyclopedia of Ethics vol. II, ed. Lawrence Becker (New York: Garland Publications, Inc., 1992):1159.

considers the most widely practiced type of slavery (which he calls "absolute slavery") in his opening remarks, but recognizes that it is only one of several possibilities. Leiser remarks,

> Although there are many forms of slavery, the predominant form involves absolute control of the slave by his or her master, in which the master owns the slave, who is regarded as a possession or piece of property in the same sense as one might own a cow, an acre of land, or a piece of furniture . . . They may be required to do any kind of work or perform any kind of service for their masters, without limitation, and their masters have virtually absolute control over them.[252]

It would be enlightening but impossible at this point to carefully study the varieties of slavery and servitude around the world from ancient times to the present. Some have attempted this, but with limitations.[253] Such a study would aid in providing an invaluable perspective on the forms of slavery and servitude mentioned in the Bible.

However, even if someone limited the study of slavery and servitude to the types practiced in the United States, there are several different situations for which people have used the term slavery. During the early European pilgrimage to America, some travelers indentured themselves to financiers who would provide funds for their ventures to the new country. The travelers pledged to work for their financiers in exchange for money to fund their trips and help them settle in the land. Later in America's history, there were few if any child labor laws to hinder someone from working young children in sweatshops twelve or fifteen hours per day. A few years ago, inmates in a number of federal prisons ran businesses like dairies or mills which supplied milk or wood products to the prison and surrounding community. However,

---

[252]Burton M. Leiser, "Slavery," in Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics vol. 4, ed. Ruth Chadwick (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998):119.

[253]W. O. Blake, ed., The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Ancient and Modern (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969, orig. published 1858); for more recent studies see Paul Finkelman, Joseph C. Miller, eds., MacMillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery (New York: MacMillan Reference USA, 1998); and Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1997).

someone accused the system of using slave labor and this activity ceased. In the mid-1990's, the Alabama prison system began using chain gangs again. Some of the workers claimed that they were doing slave labor. This paper's position is that some of these alleged slave operations were unethical (e.g., extended child labor) and others were not (e.g., inmates supplying food). The point is that one must not assume that every practice to which someone has applied the words "slave" or "servant" is evil.

Servants are still used around the world today. Lots of people employ servants in Africa, India, Pakistan, England, and elsewhere and it is not considered to be slavery. Absolute slavery (in the sense earlier described by Leiser) continues to be practiced in some places as well. But slavery and servitude are normally considered to be two different practices. They are somewhat related in that someone is serving, caring for, working for, and/or doing the bidding of someone else. But slavery is usually thought of as an unethical practice, whereas servitude is practiced even by many who condemn slavery. Yet, there are types of servitude which would also be considered slavery (as will be seen shortly in this section). It is important to see that like so many words in so many languages, these words can be used in different contexts for practices which share certain characteristics (like work, responsibility, submission, a boss, etc.) but differ dramatically in the details of who is involved, why they are involved, where it is practiced, etc. Therefore, attempting to describe even these two situations (much less the entire range of different types) with the single word slavery can and often does confuse the issue.

The popular concept of a slave (to which Leiser and Hare allude in their articles) is captured in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as, "a person held in servitude as the chattel of another" and "one that is completely subservient to a dominating influence." That is, slaves' ontological status as human beings as well as their freedom to do as they please have both been completely erased. The two functional notions

seem to be "chattel" and "completely subservient." These two aspects of slavery are so offensive because (1) a slave is a mere thing, an object, and no better than an animal or a bale of hay, and because (2) a slave has no significant freedom, is totally at the mercy of the master's whims. This gives the master license to inflict horrible beatings, rape, inhumane living conditions, and forced labor above and beyond the call of ordinary duty as expected in a normal, ethical employer/employee relationship.

Leiser further describes this notion of absolute slavery.

> Such a slave was regarded as the absolute property of his or her master. The master could buy or sell his slaves. He could beat them. He could treat them as well or as badly as he pleased. He could exploit them sexually . . . A slave owner who killed his slave, either directly or by starving or mistreating him, was usually subject to no punishment. The slave was in all respects like a pet dog or horse. If the owner concluded that one of his farm animals or one of his slaves was not worth keeping, he could dispose of either of them in any way he chose.[254]

In the biblical literature, there are easily more than four different types of slavery and/or servitude referred to in a literal fashion, and others through metaphor. None of them is unequivocally of the absolute variety. (1) There is the servitude practiced during the Patriarchal period prior to the advent of the Mosaic Law. (2) There is that practiced under the Mosaic Law for the slave/servant who was a Jew and (3) that practiced under the Mosaic Law for the slave/servant who was a non-Jew (and there were several different types of, reasons for, and degrees of servitude even during this period in both of these two major categories). (4) There was also that practiced in the Roman empire during the New Testament period, in the Christian era (with a great deal of variety as well). Throughout these periods, various nations with which the patriarchs, the Jews, and the Christians had contact also practiced different degrees of servitude and slavery.

---

[254]Leiser 120.

*Intrinsic Evil*

Precisely why is slavery and/or servitude wrong? Intuitively, something may seem to be wrong with anything, but stating it with precision can be difficult. Aristotle and Hare's intuitions about the nature of slaves, women, and free men are very different from one another. So since Hare believes that "the intuitive level of thinking is not self-sustaining," he knows that he must be able to verbalize adequately why he has such a negative intuition about slavery. But his attempt to do so puts him in a quandary. He concludes that slavery is wrong because of its potential for abuse.[255] When someone has power over someone else, experience proves that this relationship is too frequently abused and thus it is too dangerous to be a good thing. But if Hare is saying that slavery is only potentially abusive, that means that it is not intrinsically evil. Thus, there could be an ethically acceptable type of slavery (at least in theory).

But for those who disagree with Hare, the question remains. Is there something about the very concept of slavery or servitude that is intrinsically evil? Is it intrinsically evil for an employer to employ a child? No. But this situation could be abused to the point that the child is put at such a disadvantage that he or she suffers inordinately and the employer commits an unethical act. Is the practice of a poorer person agreeing to work for others in payment for financial assistance intrinsically wrong? No. But this situation could be abused to the extent that the financier could make life miserable for the borrower. Is it wrong to have power over someone? No. Is it intrinsically evil for an employer to have a *great deal* of control over an employee's pay, work hours, behavior, etc.? No. But can an employer's control go too far so that the employer has complete control of an employee? Yes. It happens. Spouses have a measure of control over each other and over their children. A teacher

[255]Hare 1159-1160.

has a measure of control over students and grades. Lawmakers have a lot of control over citizens. But all of these situations are potentially evil and are in fact abused on a regular basis.

Is it intrinsically evil for one person to be a servant of another? Not necessarily. It depends on which type of "servant" is used. Then what is evil about slavery?

Orlando Patterson suggests four evils of slavery: (1) violence (physical abuse of the slave), (2) natal alienation (the forced separation of the slave from his people), (3) dishonor (the slave is chattel), and (4) social death (the slave is a social non-entity).[256] Incorporating these with the two aspects of slavery which prominently figure into the dictionary and Leiser's descriptions, maybe the following list of interrelated concepts are at the heart of slavery:

1. Person stealing/kidnapping
2. Hopeless loss of individual freedom for the slave, lack of true autonomy
3. Forced labor, surviving solely for the owner's selfish interests
4. Literally owning a human being as a mere piece of property equivalent to dogs, cattle, etc., without regard to their humanity, human life and talents/abilities being reduced to sheer monetary sums and labor output considerations
5. Forced separation of slave families with no hope for maintaining familial ties
6. The master/owner's freedom to do what he chooses to the slave without fear of repercussions (as in rape, cruel punishment, etc.)

Subsequently in this section, these six points will be referred to as "the defining points." Any practice that involves one or more of these defining points (or perhaps even something similar which is not included in this list) in the sense intended here, should be condemned, regardless of the terms by which it is known (slave, servant, bondservant, house servant, helper, maid, etc.). Is this list what Hare was looking for? Probably not. Hare could ask by what moral standard these practices are considered

---

[256]See chapter one of Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981)

evil. Mere intuition is not good enough. Perhaps each of these defining points should be argued and evaluated. But for the purposes of this paper, simply stating them should be sufficient. Most available ethical theories would condemn these practices.

*Does the Bible Condone Slavery?*

Now the issue can more narrowly focus on whether the Bible either explicitly or implicitly sanctions a particular form of slavery or servitude which is intrinsically evil insofar as it is characterized by the six defining points. If the Bible does sanction an intrinsically evil act, it would be difficult to maintain the traditional concepts of the nature of the Bible, biblical ethics, biblical inspiration, and biblical authority unless those concepts underwent substantial changes.

As this chapter of the dissertation shows, different ways of approaching the Bible result in different ways of thinking about biblical authority and ethics. Traditionalists apparently believe that if the Bible sanctions activity X today or has sanctioned it at some point in the past, then X is not an intrinsically evil act. However, liberals could say that if some section of the Bible sanctions X, that does not necessarily mean that X was ever a good act, because, for one thing, the Bible does not offer one simple, monolithic stance on an issue like slavery. Two or three or more views of slavery or servitude may be set forth in the Bible depending on what the writer of each section of the Bible believed. People must use their own lights to think through ethical issues. Some would rely on inner testimony of the Holy Spirit to assist them in solving this type of ethical challenge. Some think that they must also consider church history and perhaps additional criteria before they can decide whether a view presented in the Bible is morally right or wrong. Some disregard the Bible altogether.

Therefore, from the traditional standpoint, the question is whether the Bible condones *any* version of slavery or servitude. If it does, what is the essential nature of that form, and does it violate one or more of the defining points?

*The Old Testament and Slavery*

Although at least four Hebrew words are rendered "slave" or "servant" in different Bible versions, the most common is עבד. This word covers a range of meanings, from the rather innocuous category of a paid worker, to a stronger sort of servitude where the worker's bond to the master is more pronounced (often via an agreement of some kind between the two), possibly even including absolute slavery.

Most of the biblical occurrences of this word are not about any normal type of labor or slavery, but picture someone's relationship to a superior or leader in addresses ("your servant/slave is at your service"), using "your servant" in the place of the subordinate's name. The psalmists do a lot of this when they address God. Soldiers do this because they were considered servants of the king (2 Samuel 11:24; 1 Kings 16:9). When a king was conquered by another, he was also said to become his servant and therefore brought him tribute (2 Kings 17:3; 24:1).

The root meaning of עבד is "work, serve."[257] For example, when Jacob contracted to work for Laban so that he could marry Laban's daughter, Jacob says, "I will *serve* thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter" (Genesis 29:18). This situation is not a slave/master relationship in the absolute sense. Jacob agreed to serve Laban for a certain period of time in order to obtain Rachel. This is a contractual servitude, a kind of indentured servitude, the conditions of which are voluntarily accepted by both parties. However, after Jacob kept his part of the agreement and had worked for seven years for Rachel, Laban tricked him and gave him the other daughter, Leah. There is nothing intrinsically unethical about the contract they made, even though Laban abused it to fulfill his own selfish designs. עבד also refers to a

contractual relationship when Job is asked whether the leviathan would make a covenant with him to be his servant (Job 41:4) and when Psalm 89:39 mentions someone who has abhorred the covenant they made with a servant.

עבד is also used when Isaac prophecies that his son Esau will *serve* his brother Jacob (Genesis 27:40). Based on the biblical description of Jacob and Esau's relationship, Esau was not Jacob's slave in the absolute sense. But since Jacob stole Esau's birthright surreptitiously, Jacob held a more prominent position than his brother. There are other cases where עבד is used in non-slave settings.

Karl Rengstorf notes that the δουλος word group which the LXX ordinarily uses to translate עבד "is used to denote a relation of dependence or service which may be forced, or sometimes voluntary, but which is always felt to be restrictive . . . ."[258] This description seems appropriate for עבד as well. Notice, however, that the restriction can be either the result of force or the result of a voluntary contract of varying strengths between two people. Therefore, when one studies the variety of ways that the word for slave/servant is used in the Old Testament it becomes clear that the word itself does not necessarily point to something unethical. Whether the word ever involves something unethical will have to be determined from a given context. This point illustrates the aforementioned problem of defining slavery, which is at the heart of this section.

Since the relevant Old Testament words could be translated as either "servant" or "slave," the following discussion will employ the word "servant." The "servant" is less likely to stir pejorative connotations in the minds of moderns (some would say *post*moderns) who live under the influence of enlightenment thought. Individual freedom was exalted in American revolutionary thought, and the horrors of early

---

[258] Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol.II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964):266.

American chattel slavery are well known. Individuals living in other countries today who have not been exposed to these influences might not have the immediate overreaction to some of the following ideas that those familiar with Western modernity might have.

Abram was a patriarch who had servants. Abram was a wealthy individual and therefore had servants, but it does not appear that they were held against their will as absolute slaves. When he fought against some local kings on one occasion, Abram armed three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his house; and they were victorious over the kings (Genesis 14:1-16). If he had three hundred and eighteen trained servants, one could speculate that he also had a number of additional servants who were not trained. How many more were women and children in addition to the fighting men? This was before Abram and Sarai had their own biological child, Isaac. His immediate family was very small, even if Abram cohabited with relatives. Most of his group was composed of servants, who outnumbered him by the hundreds. They did not remain in absolute slavery out of fear of Abram. They went into battle against enemy kings, risking their lives rather than turning on their master to gain their freedom. Compare this with the later Roman proverb which pictures a more uneasy situation, "So many slaves, so many enemies."[259] There is no biblical evidence that the Patriarchs (those who lived before Moses) practiced "absolute slavery" even though there are certain commonalities between absolute slavery and the type of servitude practiced by Abram that could lead a modern reader unknowingly to make the jump from one to the other.

**The Mosaic Law**

Clearly, some Israelites had servants (both Jewish and non-Jewish), but the Mosaic Law regulated the practice of servitude and/or slavery. Even though the same

---

[259]Seneca Letters From a Stoic 47.5.

words for servant or slave were used that referred to the absolute slavery of the surrounding nations, in Israel the practice was altered and moderated considerably. A number of sources say that for the Jews, servitude was substantially different from other nations. In his discussions of slavery among the Greeks, Romans, and Christian and Islamic nations, Leiser points out, "In ancient Israel, according to the Bible, the institution of slavery existed, but in a greatly modified form."[260] What distinguished it from absolute slavery practiced in other nations at that time was that in Israel, "The slave was given human and legal rights unheard of in contemporary societies."[261] The Israelites were not even permitted to treat animals as badly as some of the other nations treated slaves. Arnold Schultz agrees that "the position of the Hebrew slave must not be confused with the lot of a slave in the cruel societies of other nations."[262] This distinction between Israel and other nations must be factored into one's considerations of the ethics of servitude in the nation of Israel.

Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser explains,

> Slavery in the Old Testament is not the horrible institution known by the same name in the modern western countries, for it often approximated employer and employee relationships, but there were aspects of it that were subject to abuse and the law [of Moses] spoke to these.[263]

One way that Jewish servitude differed was that it was not racially based. In a historical discussion of slavery, Shannon Duval says that after the year 1500 A. D., slavery became associated with racism whereby one race was deemed inferior to another and thus "deserved" to be enslaved by the superior race. Regarding racist slavery, Duval comments,

---

[260]Leiser 120.

[261]Christopher J. H. Wright, Walking in the Ways of the Lord (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 124.

[262]Arnold C. Schultz, "Slave, Slavery," in Baker's Dictionary of Theology ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983):489.

[263]Walter C. Kaiser, Toward Old Testament Ethics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 98.

> it became possible to justify allowing a slave master to treat slaves in whatever way he or she felt appropriate. Slaves could be worked to death, beaten, killed, sexually abused, and generally subjected to treatment that would horrify us if perpetrated even against animals today.[264]

However, in

> Ancient Rome, Greece, and Israel, slaves retained some person rights, and may even have been of the same racial group as their masters. In these times, conditions existed for setting slaves free, and intentional mistreatment of slaves was subject to punishment . . . .[265]

Some Israelites kept Israelite servants, and some Israelite servants kept their own Israelite servants. Thus, Israelite servitude was not racist as was the more familiar eighteenth century slave trade that found buyers in Cuba, Spain, the United States, and elsewhere.

**Mosaic Laws Regarding Servants**

Slavery and servitude were accepted parts of life in much of the ancient world. Though the Mosaic Law did not outlaw servitude or slavery *per se*, it stated a number of specific rules regarding acceptable treatment of servants. Most details of daily life for the servant do not appear in the Old Testament text, so readers who are unfamiliar with that culture might wonder why certain of these laws were called for, what kinds of situations they grew out of, how much the laws assumed that the Jews already knew about the situations, etc. However, by reading a few of the laws, a reader can get a glimpse of the uniqueness of Jewish servitude.

As the New Testament says, laws are made for lawbreakers.[266] In a way, the Mosaic laws regarding servants define limits and provide strictures for those who would test them. But it might reasonably be concluded that lots of people did not need those limits because they already treated servants well. This does not mean that no one ever violated the laws. Laws against rape, theft, and murder do not stop

---

[264]R. Shannon Duval, ed., "Slavery," in Encyclopedia of Ethics (New York: Facts On File, 1999):251.

[265]Ibid. 251.

[266]1 Timothy 1:9

everyone from committing these crimes. It just means that these things were not condoned, but were condemned and would be punished.

Old Testament law did not exemplify defining point number four. First, Jews were not allowed to make a servant out of a kidnapped Jew, and the slave trade was outlawed. Deuteronomy 24:7 says, "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you" (KJV). Although this verse does not directly address the issue of kidnapping non-Jews, more will be said about it shortly. R. E. O. White comments that in Israel, "as in Athens, Hammurabi, and Rome, kidnapping into slavery is punishable by death . . . ."[267] This at the very least mitigates against the view that Old Testament servitude fulfills the first of the defining points and limits the charge that the Mosaic Law allowed slavery as it is commonly considered.

Second, a Jewish servant could not be held indefinitely. He or she had to be freed after six years (in a Sabbath year; Exodus 21:2; Deuteronomy 15:12-18). There were several other ways for a servant to gain freedom as well. For example, when a Jew was in poverty and sold himself to a non-Jew, a family member could redeem him or he could redeem himself if he prospered in the master's service (Leviticus 25:48-49). Then, when a servant left, the master could not let him go empty-handed. He had to furnish the departing servant with "liberal" provisions from his flock, threshing floor, and winepress (Deuteronomy 15:12-14).

One of the troubling aspects of Jewish servitude for some modern readers is that the Mosaic law did not require or force a servant to leave a master. It is not easy for moderns to understand why a servant would not jump at a chance to leave a master, but they must remember that this was not absolute slavery. A servant might

---

[267]R. E. O. White, Biblical Ethics (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979):21.

decide to remain with the master, as when the law says, "if your servant says to you, 'I do not want to leave you,' because he loves you and your family and is well off with you . . . ." (Deuteronomy 15:16 NIV). Among other things, being in a good home presented the possibility of gaining a share of the master's inheritance, and perhaps even inheriting the entire estate.[268] If a servant decided not to stay, laws also governed those conditions so that he or she would not be abused as a result.

Servants could marry members of the master's family (1 Chronicles 2:35) and could even marry the master. If this occurred, the new mate had to be treated with the proper respect afforded to a spouse (Exodus 21:9). If a man acquired a servant girl with the promise that he would marry her, but then changed his mind and married a different woman, he still had to treat the servant in some ways as if he had married her (by providing her with food, money, etc.). If he failed to do this, she was free to leave (Exodus 21:7-11). She was also free to go if her go'el (a relative who could purchase her freedom) redeemed her.

A servant could also run away from his master without fear of being harmed (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). The law does not provide details about the reasons why a servant might flee, but one reason might be that a master was being abusive. The law says that no one is responsible for returning the servant to the master. He could flee to another town and stay there. This violates the second defining point. However, if non-Jewish servants did not take advantage of laws like this, they could be kept in perpetuity.

Compare this practice with the fugitive slave law Compromise of 1850 and how it affected runaway slaves.[269] The United States Congress gave slave owners the freedom to pursue runaway slaves, to organize groups of private citizens to help them

---

[268]See Proverbs 17:2 (cf. Genesis 15:3) and Proverbs 29:21.

[269]For example, see Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and My Freedom (Project Gutenberg, 1995):167.

recapture the runaways, and to involve police and court systems in the pursuit. The law made it clear that anyone caught assisting slaves in their escape would be severely punished.

Third, Mosaic stipulations prohibited the physical abuse of servants. If two men fought and one hit the other with a rock or fist, and if the victim healed, the aggressor had to pay for the victim's loss of time and compensate him for the healing process (Exodus 21:18-21). Similarly, if a man hurt his servant, the man was punished if the servant did not recover. If the master severely hurt a servant, and the master's intentions were debatable, the servant had to be set free immediately (Exodus 21:26-27). A cruel master was not allowed to treat a servant in just any inhumane way he pleased. No one was given absolute control over a servant. Old Testament servitude was not unlimited forced labor that served only the owner's selfish interests, disregarding interests of the servant, the third defining point. Rather, consideration of the servant's interests were built into the Law.

Fourth, servants got time off. They had at least one day off each week since they did not work on the Sabbath Day (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 25:6), and they received a number of other mandatory days off in connection with Jewish holy days. This also mitigates against the third defining point.

These few of the relevant texts distinguish Jewish servitude from the absolute slavery practiced by the surrounding nations. It is particularly interesting that when the Torah states some of these laws, they are followed by the reminder, "remember that you were bondmen in the land of Egypt," calling on the Israelites to remember how it felt to be abused by their masters so that they would treat their servants well. Their Egyptian taskmasters had beaten them, forced them to labor, and abused them to the point that the Israelites were helpless and cried out in sorrow (Exodus 3:7; 5:14). The Old Testament claims that God heard their cries and rescued them. The text,

therefore, says that God told the Israelites not to rule over their servants "ruthlessly" as the Egyptians had ruled over them (Exodus 1:13-14; Leviticus 25:46 NIV). Even when a Jew sold himself to a non-Jew, the master was forbidden to treat the servant "ruthlessly" (Leviticus 25:53). For instance, the command, "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates" is followed the poignant reminder (Deuteronomy 24:14-18). But other aspects of Jewish servitude still trouble the modern mind.

**Servants as Property**

Some passages describe behavior which sounds foreign and harsh to the modern ear, and perhaps to those who are familiar with Christian principles, but this does not make the behavior evil. For example, some think that it is immoral that the servant was at times considered a part of a person's property (Exodus 21:21). But even when this was done, the Law said that a servant was supposed to be considered a fully human being and never a simple object or chattel. Such statements must always be understood in light of the rest of what the Mosaic Law said about servants and their rights, freedoms, and humanity. When a man's estate was assayed, the list also included his wife and children. This does not dehumanize them. Of course, in the minds of some Jews, this could contribute to wrong views about them, but the concept itself is not dehumanizing. For example, the man's family was not thought of as mere chattel. Add to this the fact that in many ways servants were considered part of the family (Exodus 20:10; 23:12) and worshiped with the family (Deuteronomy 12:12, 18; 16:14).

Having a servant under the Jewish legal system did not involve "owning a human being" or "person stealing" in the way that some of the early Americans and others practiced absolute slavery. There were enormous differences between "owning"

animals and having servants under the Jewish system because the Jews always made a distinction between human beings and animals. This resulted in significant differences between the meaning of "having" animals and "having" servants.

Therefore, under the Mosaic law system, a human being could not be "purchased" in the absolute sense. The phrase translated as "pay for," as in paying for a servant (קָנָה) could also be translated as "acquire" or "gain." Languages and practices must be considered within the framework of the Old Testament setting and within the parameters of the Mosaic Law. Buying a servant in the Old Testament was not the same as an American plantation's owner paying money for a piece of human flesh to do his bidding, after which the slave could disobey only at the risk of life and limb.

**Sources of Servants and Slaves**

As Dillon points out, people became servants in ancient Israel for a number of reasons, but "the basic supply source for temporary slaves was hunger, debt, or inability to compensate for a theft."[270] Although parts of the Mosaic law included provisions for the poor and destitute (such as the practice of gleaning), there was no centralized federal institution to care for them like the American welfare system or the benevolent institutions available in many nations today. For some of the poor, serving a master and taking advantage of his or her protection and provision was the welfare system.

One consideration is that "Since the [Jews'] land could not be sold, it meant that the only collateral available to the Hebrews was their labor power."[271] Kaiser further explains, "Since the land could not be sold but had to remain in the family permanently, the only recourse that a Hebrew had for borrowing money was to sell his

---

[270]Dillon 3322.
[271]Kaiser 99.

or her labor for up to six years."[272] Selling themselves allowed them to pay off debts (almost like filing bankruptcy; Leviticus 25:35, 39, 47). Or, if deeply indebted, a family might bond their children as servants to a more prosperous family (Nehemiah 5:5). Or, as Dillon noted earlier, if a thief could not repay his victim, becoming a servant facilitated remuneration.

It is interesting that later in history, since there were certain perks to being a Jewish servant as opposed to being a non-Jewish servant, "Jews who were anxious to sell themselves into slavery often could not find Jewish purchasers." A popular saying at the time was, "Whenever one acquires a Hebrew slave he acquires a master."[273] This apparently led to many Gentiles' becoming proselytes in order to receive the extra benefits of being a Jewish servant.[274] This outlook was not indicative of absolute slavery.

**Conquered People**

On certain occasions Israel made conquered people their servants, but they were not allowed to mistreat them, and the Mosaic Law did not allow the Israelites to think of the servants as chattel. In a world which moderns consider brutal, when conquered people were captured (rather than killed), they were held very much like prisoners of war who served the victors. In order to reach an informed decision about whether the Jews practiced some sort of unethical, racist, or otherwise absolute slavery with conquered enemies, one would need to know not only how and why people were taken in war, but also how they were used and treated afterwards. As

---

[272]Ibid. 288-289.

[273]S. Scott Bartchy, Mallon Xrhsai: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21 (Tubingen: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973):52. This was Bartchy's doctoral dissertation. It is a tremendous source of information. Anyone who really wants to understand slavery during New Testament times must read this.

[274]E. E. Urbach, "The Laws Regarding Slavery as a Source for Social History of the Period of the Second Temple, the Mishnah and Talmud" in Zion: Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies, transl. R. J. Loewe 25 (1960):48.

seen already, the Law was clear about many aspects of their treatment, and specifically forbade treating them "ruthlessly."

Does taking captives in war and making servants of them constitute racist slavery? No. This is not a matter of race; it is a matter of enemies in wartime. A nation's enemies are usually people from outside that nation. Because warfare involves other races, this does not make it a racist policy. Their human status was not denigrated because of their race. Enemies are taken as prisoners because of their national/political ties. Although it is possible to abuse prisoners, and that has happened innumerable times, there is nothing intrinsically immoral about holding prisoners or about prisoners' serving their captors. Although it is possible to overwork prisoners, nothing is intrinsically immoral about prisoners' working and producing for the common good while captured, particularly if they are shown respect as human beings, well provided for, allowed a great deal of freedom to raise families, earn an income, have their own servants, own their own belongings, etc., as was the case in ancient Israel.

As noted earlier, the Israelites did not carry on a slave industry like the one in our pre-civil war days when slavers paid Africans to kidnap people or when the slavers themselves kidnapped people and took them away to be sold in America, Spain, and elsewhere, if the poor souls survived transit. This is not analogous to the Jewish practice of taking war captives. Human beings were not (in Kant's terms) considered to be merely means to an end and thus thought of only in terms of their output.

Thus, Gordon Wenham, lecturer in Semitic Studies at The Queen's University in Belfast, says,

> Slavery in the ancient Orient was not nearly as ghastly as it was in more modern times. There was little difference between a slave and a hired labourer

(Lv. 25:39-55). Indeed it could be argued that Hebrew slavery was more humane than its modern equivalent – imprisonment.[275]

This is not to say that properly understood, the practice of servitude under the Mosaic Law system three thousand years ago in a different culture in a harsh, bedouin, agrarian environment will be palatable to western eyes in the twenty-first century. But it was not chattel slavery; it did not involve person stealing; servants had a number of rights; and there was no slave trade as commonly practiced two hundred years ago. If one were to line up the Old Testament teachings about these matters next to the pre-civil war American laws about chattel slavery, there would be a pronounced contrast. The Jewish practice was not savagery or brutal treatment of subhuman tools.

**Conclusions Regarding the Old Testament and Slaves**

Even with the clarity of so many Mosaic laws, as far as clear conclusions go, some issues connected with this subject are still unclear, and this paper should not come across as making it seem so. The preceding comments admittedly do not address every relevant issue on this topic. But any biblical text that appears to be ethically difficult must be interpreted in light of the proper understanding of Jewish law and Old Testament moral principles. More space needs to be dedicated to a thorough understanding of Jewish servitude along with a comparative study of the varieties of servitude and slavery that existed at the time. This information should then be analyzed in light of a philosophical analysis of exactly what constitutes a slave and/or servant role in each of these cases with an eye to stating a more lucid, ethical taxonomy of which varieties are right and wrong and why that is so in each case.

Let us revisit the main elements of Leiser's analysis and condemnation of absolute slavery. He says that it "involves absolute control of the slave by his or her master." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. Leiser says that the absolute slave "is

---

[275]Gordon Wenham, "Law and the Legal System in the Old Testament" in Law, Morality, and the Bible: A Symposium ed. Bruce Kay and Gordon Wenham (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978):44.

regarded as a possession or piece of property in the same sense as one might own a cow, an acre of land, or a piece of furniture." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. Leiser says that the absolute slave "may be required to do any kind of work or perform any kind of service for their masters, without limitation." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. Leiser says, "their masters have virtually absolute control over them."[276] The Mosaic Law disallowed this too. An absolute master "could treat them as well or as badly as he pleased." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. An absolute master "could exploit them sexually." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. The absolute "slave owner who killed his slave, either directly or by starving or mistreating him, was usually subject to no punishment." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. In absolute slavery, "the slave was in all respects like a pet dog or horse." The Mosaic Law disallowed this. In absolute slavery, "if the owner concluded that one of his farm animals or one of his slaves was not worth keeping, he could dispose of either of them in any way he chose."[277] The Mosaic Law disallowed this.

Therefore, the discussion becomes more intricate. How much control, power, or authority over someone is too much? What types of and how much freedom can an outside force limit before it goes too far? At what point does it cross the line of acceptability? In a fuller metaethical study of this issue, these questions might find some degree of resolution. The answers could serve as normative standards in light of which a set number of examples of slavery/servitude could be assessed.[278]

More information is needed about the details of daily living in ancient Israel and exactly how servants and masters lived. Biblical texts include occasional glimpses into

---

[276]Leiser 119.

[277]Ibid. 120.

[278]For example, how much freedom does a baseball player have when he is under contract to a team? Is it acceptable to speak of players in terms such as "Texas sold Jenkins to Los Angeles" or "New York traded Fitzgerald for two players and a percentage of gate last year"? Or, how much coercion is involved when a manager will not allow a player out of a contract and forces him to play?

the interactions of servants and masters, but not much beyond that. Many times the text depicts someone saying "unto the servant" to drive faster, go and check something, or give someone a message, but nothing is morally problematic in such cases because lots of employers tell their workers such things on a daily basis. The details of the day to day details of these relationships are not recorded. One should not read stories of rape and plunder of chattel slaves into the silence.

It is not clear whether the events of the book of Job took place before or during the Mosaic period, but notice Job's attitude toward his servants.

> If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers? (Job 31:13-15)

It sounds a lot like he was thinking along the lines of the so-called Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). He does not appear to be an "absolute master."

An interesting but brief master and servant episode occurs in 1 Samuel. When young Saul took a servant with him to look for some lost donkeys, nothing in the story indicates that the servant was an absolute slave who was there only to do the bidding of the boy. He was there for help and protection. On the surface, the two seemed to be friends. When they had traveled a distance and needed some direction they decided to visit a prophet, but they had eaten their bread and none remained to give to the prophet. However, the servant said that he had some money that they could give the to prophet. When they eventually arrived at the prophet's residence, he "brought them into the guest-chamber, and made them sit in the chiefest place" among the thirty guests (1 Samuel 9:22). Where did the servant get the money? Why bring the servant into the gathering? Why exalt the servant also instead of the master only? These and other questions are not answered in the text. But servants could own lots of things, including having their own servants; so they obviously had some independent income

and living resources to make such purchases and had enough work for servants to do (2 Samuel 9:9-10).

One case where the Bible gives several instances of a master and servant working together is in the life of Gehazi, servant of the prophet Elisha. Gehazi had a colorful life with the prophet and was involved in a number of fascinating escapades as a result. But he seems to have been more of a sidekick than an absolute slave who had no power or influence in the relationship. On at least one occasion, he is even depicted as talking to king Jehoram about some of his and Elisha's adventures (2 Kings 8:4-5). Similar anecdotal insights seldom appear in the Old Testament, and intimate details are scant.

More information is also needed about Jewish societal structure as well. The way resident aliens, sojourners, hired laborers, and others fit into the social strata would further enlighten the modern reader's conceptualization of Jewish servitude.[279] A better understanding of their laws of marriage, charity for the poverty stricken, treatment of widows and orphans, and other practices would be helpful. The survey material included here is admittedly only an introduction and is offered only for the purpose of further clarifying the problem and suggesting some possible answers. Robert North opposed writers who deny that slavery existed in ancient Israel. He made a suitable summary statement for this section when he said that there was a true slavery countenanced in Israel, "but a humane one. It was a paternal refuge for the impoverished and a sanctuary for conquered aliens."[280]

---

[279]For example, see sources like Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, Families in Ancient Israel (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997) and the classic Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965).

[280]Robert North, Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee. (Rome: Analecta Biblica, 1954):135.

***The New Testament and Slavery***

The situation is different in the New Testament. After the death of Christ, Christians were taught not to observe the Mosaic Law *per se* and therefore only encountered the Jewish form of slavery/servitude from the outside rather than from within. However, Christians did cross paths with Jewish slavery/servitude as well as the Greek and Roman varieties of the practice.

The types of slavery and servitude practiced in the Roman empire during the time of New Testament events were different from Jewish servitude, although in some ways Roman law codified a few of the Jewish principles. Whereas, "Prior to the first century A. D., the chief means by which people were taken into slavery were by being captured in war or being kidnapped by pirates," Rome eventually outlawed kidnapping for the slave trade.[281] When the Roman wars ended and the number of captives was low, "the primary source for slaves became breeding."[282] Even though "slavery was by no means an ideal situation" even after Roman law encoded a few rights for slaves, "it was often much better than modern men are inclined to think, not only in the time of Homer and classic Athens, but also in the Empire."[283]

Before commenting on slavery in 1 Corinthians chapter seven, Bartchy's awareness of so many categories and degrees of slavery and servitude in the first century drove him to say,

> I seek in this chapter to define with some precision what it meant to be a slave in Corinth in the middle of the first century A. D. This intention to be specific forces me to avoid any attempt at a general definition of slavery, and it challenges the reader to put aside his ideas about Negro slavery in the nineteenth century, ideas which pervasively distort the modern comprehension of slavery in other periods and cultures.[284]

In recognition of this difficulty, John Crook notes,

---

[281]Bartchy 45.
[282]Ibid.
[283]Ibid.
[284]Ibid. 37.

> In spite of the Roman law's insistence on sharply distinguishing between slave and free, the evidence suggests that in social, cultural and economic terms there was something much more like a "continuum" of statuses, quite apart from labour conditions in which the free worker might be worse off than the slave.[285]

As was the case in Mosaic times, people became slaves in the Roman empire in a number of ways. Among them (as was also the case under the Mosaic Law) was an option almost inconceivable to moderns; "large numbers of persons even sold themselves into slavery; they did so for a variety of reasons, among which were to find a life that was easier than they had as freemen, to secure special jobs, and to climb socially."[286]

Without minimizing the fact that many slaves were terribly abused, in order to have a full picture of the situation one must see that Roman slaves were not always treated like chattel as movies and adventure stories so often picture them. For instance, consider the case recorded in Matthew 8:6 of the centurion who wanted his servant to be healed of palsy. Why assume that the centurion had only pragmatic or financial motivations? Why not rather assume that he was concerned for the servant's well being *per se*?

Literature exists that surveys slaves' jobs, slaves' views of slavery, reasons for the period of slave uprisings, etc. It shows that there was no particular menial job that slaves did to the exclusion of jobs that involved socialization, handling money, authority, or other empowering positions. In fact, "there seems to be no type of work in the first century which was considered exclusively the work of slaves."[287] They were involved in many areas of responsibility. "By no means was the slave's position always a 'subordinate' one."[288] They served in a variety of leadership positions.

---

[285]John Crook, Law and Life of Rome (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967):58.

[286]Ibid. 46. For a discussion of contractual requirements among Jewish servants and masters and their influence on similar agreements in Greece, see David Daube, Studies in Biblical Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947):41-53

[287]Bartchy 71.

[288]Ibid.

Large numbers of slaves were in Rome. Everett Ferguson says, "it is estimated that one in five of the residents in Rome was a slave."[289] Seneca says that someone proposed in the senate that slaves wear a particular type of garment so that everyone could distinguish the slaves from the free men. This was voted down for fear that the slaves would realize how greatly they outnumbered the free men and women.[290] That says a lot about how pervasive the slave influence was and how they infiltrated virtually every aspect of the society. This does not change the fact that they were slaves. But one must guard against a limited perception of first century slavery. For instance,

> while some public slaves got little more than their keep, others ranked socially high enough to be elected to cult societies and athletic clubs of citizens and were rich enough to buy deputies who did their work for them while they enjoyed the emoluments.[291]

In the New Testament texts that refer to slaves and servants, it is not always clear which variety of slavery is being addressed, and the reader does not know how the individual masters being addressed treated their slaves and/or servants. Several Greek words have been translated in the New Testament as "servant, slave, or attendant," but the two most frequent are δουλος and διακονος. Both are regularly used in the sense of one who is a servant of Christ, of the church, or of a fellow Christian (as when Jesus is recorded as saying, "the greatest among you will be your servant"). Other words can refer to specific areas of service. Peter tells the servants to obey their masters. However, even though Peter presupposed that slavery was in practice and perhaps also presupposed that his epistle would be read to or by some

---

[289]Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993):56.

[290]De Clementia 1.24.1

[291]A. H. M. Jones, The Greek City From Alexander to Justinian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940):242.

who had slaves or even to the slaves themselves, the word he used to address servants was οικετης (household servant), not δουλος.

Bartchy's work incorporated dozens of works on slavery along with numerous archaeological and historical findings. Yet, he concluded,

> Nevertheless, much work has yet to be done before scholars will be able to present a complete and convincing picture of slavery in ancient culture. Preparing this dissertation was made more difficult by the lack of any serious, full-scale history of slavery in the Greco-Roman world. However this gap may be filled, research which directs its attention less to the abolition of slavery and more to its function in the Greco-Roman world will certainly convincingly demonstrate that no aspect of ancient culture can be fully understood without reference to the institution of slavery.[292]

The following question cannot be framed properly unless these limitations are accepted.

**Does the New Testament Condone Slavery?**

Jesus said that his purpose was to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), but he also did a lot of social work. The New Testament says that he healed people, taught them, gave them hope, and fed them. He did not preach social upheaval, but rather spoke of a spiritual kingdom in direct contrast to a political kingdom on earth (John 18:36). His message (which was complicated enough for a lot of people, including his own apostles) would have been greatly complicated by mixing spiritual salvation with civil unrest.[293] Jesus taught people to pay their taxes to Caesar but did not condone all of the emperor's practices (Matthew 22:17-21). Of course, the spiritual lessons that Jesus taught would overflow into people's civil lives (e.g., go the second mile, do good to those who abuse you, love others as yourself, treat others as you want to be treated). Therefore, although he launched no frontal assault on the practice of slavery, even his most fundamental philosophy should have

---

[292]Bartchy 30.

[293]Earl Edwards, "The Primary Mission of the Church as Viewed Through the Teachings and Lives of Jesus and His Apostles" in Alternative (May 1977):1-55.

caused deep changes in anyone who had previously practiced absolute slavery. Gilby has this in mind when he points out that, "Neither the universal suffrage nor the classless society are imperatives of the Gospel and Christian theology."[294] The intertwining of Christian theology and Christian living eventually had far reaching socio-political effects.

The apostle Paul had a similar approach. Rather than attempt to cover all of the bases on the varieties of slavery and servitude, Paul dealt with underlying issues that could eradicate any unethical practice including slavery. Although in the first letter to Timothy (1:10), he clearly condemned "manstealing" (or "slave-dealers" as Weymouth translates it), his letters do not elsewhere directly condemn slavery at length. Rather than mount a major attack against a generalized concept of slavery, he taught slaves, servants, and masters spiritual principles such as, "Masters . . . do not threaten [your slaves] . . . and there is no respect of persons with God" (Ephesians 6:9); "Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair" (Colossians 4:1); and the brotherhood of masters and slaves (1 Timothy 6:1-2). White says,

> Modern Christians are surprised at Paul's acceptance of the master-slave relationship, even though it was a household arrangement, sanctioned by Jewish law, universal in the first century, and extremely dangerous to attack . . . After several slave uprisings, Rome was ever on guard against emancipation movements that could destroy social order. Paul's concern for outsiders' reactions to the attitude of Christian slaves shows him aware of the danger that if to their slanders aimed at the church it could be whispered that Christianity fomented slave-rebellion, then all toleration, and all opportunity for evangelism, would cease . . . Paul on one occasion returns a runaway slave-thief, now converted, to his master, though with many urgent pleas for clemency and a Christian welcome . . . it is probable that he was temperamentally more interested in the slave's advancement, in his being treated as a brother, than in his emancipation.[295]

Indeed, White claims that Paul "defined and demanded, two attitudes which were ultimately to end [slavery]."[296] He thinks that this was "an answer to slavery far

---

[294]Gilby 3321.
[295]R. E. O. White 177.
[296]Ibid. 177.

more practical and immediate than any movement for emancipation."[297] Bruce Kaye concurs that the New Testament writers did not seem to see a problem with accepting slaves into the Christian fellowship without the commonly accepted social distinctions. Nor did they seem to have a problem with refraining from openly condemning slavery. Then he states, "From this side of the nineteenth century this may seem a little surprising, and to some perhaps even a little embarrassing. The New Testament writers, however, seem to be occupied with other matters."[298]

Someone might take offense at Paul's admonition to slaves that they remain in their situation (1 Corinthians chapter seven). But the context must be taken into consideration. Paul was not saying that a slave must remain a slave, because he also says that if the slave has an opportunity to be free, take the opportunity (v. 21). The context shows that the apostle is addressing some questions that the Corinthians had asked (7:1). Readers today see only the answers, not the questions, like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. Paul tells the people that it is okay to stay in the situation they were in when the gospel found them. As examples, he uses marriage and slavery. He tells the Corinthians that being married or unmarried, slave or free did not make a person any more or less a Christian, and did not make a person more or less spiritual. What he says is, "Wast thou called being a bondservant? Care not for it" (v. 21). Paul says that a slave can be just as fully a Christian as his or her master. He does not sanction absolute slavery. He is not even directly addressing the morality of the issue in this particular context (although encouraging a slave to get free if possible sounds close to it). He accepts it on one level, i.e., he recognizes that it is going on and says that a person can be a Christian while a slave. But since there are several different

---

[297]Ibid. 178.

[298]Bruce Kaye, "The New Testament and Social Order," in Law, Morality, and the Bible: A Symposium ed. Bruce Kay and Gordon Wenham (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978):113.

varieties of slavery and servitude, who is to say whether he was simply addressing absolute slavery in this context? No writer gives all of his or her views about a subject and its related issues every time he or she addresses a subject even though in different contexts they will cover related issues (as Paul does elsewhere in regards to absolute slavery as discussed earlier).

As Rengstorf says,

> If slavery was not rejected from the Christian standpoint, every effort was made to bring it to an end. When a slave had the chance of freedom, he was to seize it joyfully, though recognising that in the last analysis it made no difference whether he was bond or free (1 Corinthians 7:21).[299]

Rengstorf adds, "the rule of love, which is rooted in the fact that all members of the community stand in the same relationship to Christ and are thus united on the same level in Him . . . must finally lead to the abolition of slavery amongst Christians."[300] Or, as Gilby puts it, "the cumulative effect of Christian influences was to suppress it eventually . . . ."[301] For example, treating someone else as oneself should keep a person from practice absolute slavery or any type of servitude in which a servant or employee is mistreated (also see the last paragraph of this section of this chapter of the dissertation).

Helmut Thielicke discusses the nature of Christian influence and how it affects the world politically and otherwise. He wonders how the church should oppose unjust laws, especially in a totalitarian government. Should they mount a public protest or march on the seat of government?

> In connection with this form of resistance the church must be careful lest the Christian view emerge as simply a counterideology, with one ideological power pitted against another. The church dare not do that which is demanded of the secular champions of political resistance or revolution: it dare not put up resistance in the name of its own theory of state and of society, based, e.g., on natural law . . . Instead it allows "the law of infiltration and subversion" to

---

[299]Rengstorf 272.
[300]Ibid.
[301]Gilby 3321.

> come into play. By this we mean the kind of indirect but nonetheless real influence that is exerted through persons as distinct from formal programs as, e.g., in Christianity's non-frontal attack on the institution of slavery in the ancient world . . . Indeed the law of infiltration and subversion becomes operative to the degree that the church's proclamation is blessed with a harvest of living Christians.[302]

Another way of stating this law of infiltration and subversion is,

> the task of the church is not to take over the orders of this aeon and change them, but to address in a responsible way the men to whom these orders are entrusted by virtue of the offices they fill.[303]

This seems to be the tack that the apostle took with Philemon and Onesimus. He did not command Philemon to free the slave, Onesimus, and he did not present a diatribe against the evils of immoral forms of slavery or servitude. Having spent time with both men, Paul would likely have been familiar with the type of δουλεια relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. Whatever type of obligation Onesimus had to Philemon, Paul tried to persuade Philemon to free Onesimus from it, saying that Onesimus was now a brother in Christ both to Paul and to Philemon (Philemon 16).

Peter Gomes incorrectly avers that when Paul told Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother, it did not mean that "Onesimus is any less a slave than he was . . ."[304] But of course it did. Gomes seems to assume the δουλεια relationship of Philemon and Onesimus was absolute slavery without recognizing the possibility of other forms that were practiced at that time. But even if Gomes is correct and Onesimus was an absolute slave, if it is the case that chattel slavery is defined as the treatment of a human being as a subhuman tool, and if it is the case that Paul told Philemon to treat Onesimus as a human being and then some – as a brother, then it is surely the case that this means Onesimus was less of a slave than he had been (or

---

[302]Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics vol. 2, ed. William Lazareth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969):359-360.

[303]Ibid. 642.

[304]Peter J. Gomes The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996):89.

perhaps the better words are "more than a slave"). After all, how can one accept an object as a brother?

This spiritual leveling could change both the spiritual and the civil relationships of Christians. "So much was this the case that in the congregation of the early church, the master might well have found himself receiving the sacrament from the hands of the slave."[305]

Therefore, Paul did not command other masters to immediately free their servants or slaves. But he did teach them that their own Master in heaven was not a respecter of persons (Ephesians 6:9) and that they should not mistreat their servants. He told masters to treat their servants justly and equitably (Colossians 4:1) because they too had a Master in heaven. He also told slaves that if they had an opportunity to be free, they should take it and not make themselves slaves of men (1 Corinthians 7:21-23). The apostle often makes it clear that when it comes to salvation, in God's sight, there is no such thing as "bond or free" (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 6:8). Salvation is for everyone, equally. With these thoughts in mind, Thielicke asks, "Has Paul really said nothing then against slavery, the social order which embraces it, and the view of man which accords with it?"[306]

Seeing that some think that Paul and the other early Christians' approach was not forthright enough, how should they have responded to the issue? Should they have begun an anti-slavery crusade and encouraged slaves and servants to rebel? Or, should they have appealed to the non-Christian, pagan masters to free their slaves on Christian principles which the masters did not share? Or, if Christians had condemned immoral forms of slavery and servitude, what impact would that have had on the ethical forms?

---

[305]Major J. Jones, Christian Ethics for Black Theology: The Politics of Liberation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974):61-62.

[306]Ibid. 644.

This approach found its way into the teaching of a number of early Christian writers (outside the New Testament). Second century author, Clement of Alexandria said that people should treat slaves as they would want to be treated because "they are human beings as we are."[307] In a similar way, the fourth century document, *Teachings of the Apostles* (also known as *The Didascalia*) lists several groups of people whose donations should not be accepted. One group listed there is those who mistreat slaves.[308]

***Conclusion***

Did the Old Testament condone slavery/servitude? Yes, apparently so. However, the key question is what those terms meant in the Old Testament context. There are admitted cultural and historical questions about the precise nature of the servant/master relationship which simply cannot be answered because of the lack of specific information available. But there is no clear evidence that the type of servitude practiced prior to the Mosaic Law was absolute slavery. The type of servitude practiced in ancient Israel also was not synonymous with the inhuman practice of abject chattel slavery. Therefore, in contrast to sanctioning an evil act, the Old Testament seems to have ameliorated a previously existing state of affairs, producing a substantive change in the practice. Of course, an evil practice could be ameliorated to an extent and remain an evil practice. But one must not assume that all forms of slavery or servitude were intrinsically evil. There were evil forms of the practice, but the biblically allowed forms do not seem to be examples of them. As Hare cautions, since the meaning and practice of slavery and servitude could vary so much from society to society, anyone should be wary of concluding that just because a society

---

[307]The Instructor Ante-Nicene Fathers 3.12 p. 293.

[308]George Wolfgang Forell, History of Christian Ethics vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979):100.

practices something called slavery or servitude (in the English language), that necessarily makes it an unquestionably ruthless and unethical practice.[309]

Did the New Testament condone slavery/servitude? During New Testament times, there were tens of thousands of slaves in the Roman empire and many of them were treated terribly. But New Testament references to slavery/servitude focus on preaching the gospel and changing individuals' hearts and not on social restructuring. The New Testament pictures the early Christians engaged in a spiritual renewal program which did not always have direct ties to a social movement, even though the spiritual changes had a significant impact on society and eventually seem to have undermined immoral varieties of slavery, planting the seeds for its dissolution among those who practiced Christian ethics. Thus, both slaves and masters are encouraged to live by Christian principles. Slaves are even encouraged to become free if they get an opportunity and are discouraged from enslaving themselves to men. The position of this paper is that the New Testament does not condone absolute slavery or other immoral forms of the practice, and that it in fact opposed such practices.

Therefore, based on linguistic, historical, and contextual grounds, the position of this paper is that it is not the case that the Bible sanctions or condones any clearly unethical types of slavery or servitude. As David Jones says, "Both testaments condemn the slave trade and chattel slavery . . . ."[310]

## CONCLUSIONS ON EPISTEMOLOGY

If people could realistically begin at philosophical "ground zero" where they believed almost nothing (*a la* the Cogito), they would have to work through a variety of philosophical topics in order to arrive at the point where this dissertation or any other writing in this area begins. However, it seems odd to take the step by step,

---

[309]Hare 1159.

[310]David Clyde Jones, Biblical Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994):154.

clinical, analytical, disinterested route from ground zero in the case of the Bible because the book itself is so much a part of a certain history that readers should consider the entire flow of Judeo-Christian background in order to see the Bible as a product of a very specific stream of events. Trying to analyze it in a vacuum simply cannot present the complete picture. But people should have good reasons for the conclusions they reach, and there seem to be good reasons for seriously considering the flow of Judeo-Christian history and its implications on the Bible and biblical topics. But even this view is undergirded by philosophical structures.

This chapter could not address all of the philosophical presuppositions connected to a topic like animal *telos* and the Bible, much less all of the issues which they broach. This chapter cannot even address all of the major inquiries required by the questions it is able to mention. But it is hoped that even with this very limited overview of a few of the options, readers are in a much better position to consider what writers (including the one who wrote this chapter) say about the Bible and animal *telos*, once they have considered something about the framework for biblical epistemology.

Presuppositions are extremely important, and everyone who writes about this issue has them. Each person has a stance on the key points of this chapter like theism, the nature and verification of revelation, the character of inspiration, the nature of the Bible, the historicity of the Bible, hermeneutics, and many other philosophical issues. The stance that people take on each of these issues will in large measure lead them in a particular direction toward a particular conclusion on the Bible and the animal *telos* question. The writers are where they are, sometimes in opposite directions from one another, because of the roads they have taken. If everyone were on the same road, holding the same presuppositions, this controversy would be a lot easier to understand and discuss. In the end, therefore, it seems clear that in order to make sense of wide

ranging disagreements about a topic, sometimes it is as important to know the person who holds a particular opinion and to know why he or she holds it, as it is to know the opinion itself.

Chapter 3

## Some Current Bible/Animal Advocates

The first chapter of this paper surveyed a number of the voices in the current discussion about the moral status of animals as it relates to their *telos*. It found that many writers share a common criticism of what they describe as the biblical or Judeo-Christian view of animal *telos*. They blame the Judeo-Christian model for exalting humanity over the animal kingdom to such a degree that human beings seem justified in "abusing" animals. There were also animal advocates who reject this characterization of the Bible. They believe that a proper understanding of the biblical view of animal *telos* will encourage better treatment of animals. But they agree that part of the problem is that the Bible does not clearly address the issue. It was necessary, therefore, that Appendix A of this paper should undertake a careful search of the Bible in order to establish a catalog of biblical passages relevant to the discussion. This research combed every page of the Bible in order to manifest fully and accurately the breadth of information available on biblical attitudes about animal *telos*.

Chapter two of this dissertation delved into a few of the reasons why there is such disagreement on these issues. Many of the problems associated with it are not obvious and yet lie at the root of the difficulties.

The next logical step for this paper is to see what role the catalog of relevant texts plays in the recent works of those who align themselves with the Judeo-Christian model and yet also agree to a large extent on the proposition that animals have certain rights and that human beings should protect them. They think the Bible teaches that animal *telos* is such that people are obligated to protect and properly treat animals.

Henceforth, this paper will refer to these writers as Bible/animal advocates for shorthand since they advocate both the importance and legitimacy of the Bible and the proper status and treatment of animals.

In order to make a helpful appraisal of current writers in this field, some markers must be established which will aid in comparing their works to what has been discovered in the catalog of Appendix A.

1. The Argument: Each writer's argument should be subjected to a critical analysis, which raises several questions. What is the central point of their argument, and how does it incorporate the concept of animal *telos*? Is each writer's argumentation unique to them, distinguishing their work from all the others, or is it simply a repetition of the same line of reasoning robed in different terminology? What is particularly biblical about their argument?

2. The Catalog: Each writer's use or non-use of the catalog of relevant biblical texts must be analyzed and gauged in order to judge their argument's overall effectiveness. How much of the catalog do they use? That is, do they use the Bible extensively across the range of the relevant texts, or do they use only the three or four most common texts, as do most writers? Do they explain their understanding of the nature of the biblical text and this might affect the way they employ the Bible in their argument?

## ANDREW LINZEY

Andrew Linzey is one of the leaders among the latest cadre of biblically focused animal benefactors. He says that several years ago, someone even referred to

him as "unofficial chaplain to the animal welfare movement."[1] He has been at the forefront of the controversy for more than twenty years. It has not been an easy job, but his dedication to alleviating animal suffering along with his respect for biblical teachings have sustained his efforts. James M. Wall says that Linzey's "concern for animals is not just another 'moral issue'; it is an inseparable part of the Christian message in which the whole created order is embraced by loving, sensitive persons."[2] In several ways, his views are reminiscent of both Karl Barth and Albert Schweitzer.[3]

Because of his deep concern and lucid argumentation, Linzey is a popular voice and has influenced a generation of Bible/animal advocates. Since he is such an important spokesman in this field today, his writing should be the first checkpoint for anyone attempting to get a handle on how the Bible is being used in the current "animal rights" discussions. Linzey suggests that his work, Christianity and the Rights of Animals is the best example of how he uses the Bible to make his case.[4]

**Linzey's Argument**

There seem to be two key elements of Linzey's argument, two biblical reasons why animals should be treated properly: (1) God's sovereignty over his creation, and (2) the priority of Spirit-filled beings. But animal *telos* underlies both points and therefore lies at the heart of Linzey's argumentation.

---

[1]Andrew Linzey, Christianity and the Rights of Animals (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987):3.

[2]"An Uncaged Vision of Nonhuman Creation" The Christian Century October 25, 1989:948.

[3]Wall 947.

[4]Personal correspondence, September 18, 1997.

Linzey believes that the biblical model of the world is not anthropocentric. The biblical view of creation should lead people to "a theocentricity or 'God-centredness.'"[5] Theocentrism is the focal point of his argument, and it is theocentrism that confers upon animals their "theos-rights." In other words, there is a "vital theological connection between God's right and animal rights."[6] Thus, properly understanding animal *telos* and treating animals properly "must follow from our recognition of God's right to have his creatures treated with respect."[7] Apparently, to respect an animal is to have proper concern for God's intent for that animal, the animal's God-given *telos*. Linzey says that all creation is a blessing from God and has value because God values it. Since God is the Supreme Being and creator, "we have to value what he values and respect what he has allowed into being."[8] If the Supreme Being brings something into being, there must be some value to it or else it would not exist. Thus, human beings are not the ultimate reference for standards of value; God is. God created his creation, values it, and has given it freedom to be what he made it to be (not an unlimited freedom, but at least it should be unencumbered in fulfilling its God-given purpose). He did not create it simply to serve humans slavishly and passively.[9] Thus, "All blessed creation should evoke from us attitudes of respecting, valuing and letting be."[10]

---

[5]Linzey, Christianity and the Rights of Animals 17.
[6]Ibid. 71.
[7]Ibid. 74.
[8]Ibid. 17.
[9]Ibid. 7-11.
[10]Ibid. 20.

Linzey believes there is a basic "commandment to all life to be itself as it is, as God intended"[11] and a human task of "letting creation be itself . . . ."[12] It seems that an animal has value because God values it for a particular reason, in that he created it to do a particular job and it should be allowed to do its job, i.e., fit into its place in nature. God created things to play certain roles in nature and it is apparently this specification of work for each thing that displays the wonderful order in the environment. Therefore, people should value it as God does and leave it alone, allowing it to fulfill the purpose for which it was created. Call it the value/God identification argument. That is, proper values come from God. Therefore, in order to hold proper values, human beings must identify their values with God's values. These values will encourage and allow animals to be what God purposed them to be.[13]

To impinge upon the fulfillment of an animal's purpose is to challenge God's will, is it not? That attitude is essentially saying, "I am not going to let this creature be what God wants it to be." This seems to imply that animals have a right to do or be what God made them to do or be (fulfill their *telos*); and whenever a human being uses an animal in a way that keeps it from accomplishing God's purpose for it, this human behavior infringes upon the animal's God-given rights and constitutes mistreatment.

---

[11]Ibid. 19.

[12]Ibid. 21.

[13]Did God create any animals for their own sake, as ends in themselves? This is not clearly stated in Linzey's book. Of course, there are animals in the depths of the oceans which human beings are just now seeing, and probably many more which have yet to be discovered. However, they could either contribute to human knowledge of the world and/or self or form an important part of the eco-system at those depths which benefit many other eco-systems, thus benefiting human beings. There may be other options available to answer this question, but Linzey does not clearly address them.

Indeed, "creation, while valuable, can become devalued or, even at times, valueless."[14] How does this happen? "The very power which authorizes creation to be itself can be turned by human will against itself and therefore into self-negation and violence."[15] Although it is God's will that a creature flourish, God has also created free moral agents who in cases like this can choose to thwart God's preference by making it impossible for an animal to fulfill its *telos* or by behaving in other ways that would conflict with its fulfilling its *telos*.

An example of human freedom choosing to thwart God's preference toward his creatures is when human beings "breed and rear creatures for gratuitous destruction" (e.g., raising fighting roosters). This act is "a reversal of divine purpose."[16] Hence, abusing animals is like stealing from God, vandalizing God's property, or treating God's will with contempt. After all, animals do not actually belong to human beings. "[God] alone *owns* them."[17]

If an artist creates a beautiful painting to hang on a wall for people to enjoy (this is the *telos* which was given it by its creator, the reason for which she made it), she would no doubt be upset to find someone using it as a food tray or a doorstop (setting aside its *telos* for their own selfish purposes). That would be an abuse of the painting, a lack of respect for its creator, and thus a mistreatment of the work. In like manner, raising dogs or chickens solely for the purpose of fighting each other would be thwarting God's purpose for dogs and chickens. They were not made simply to fight,

---

[14]Ibid. 12.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Ibid. 108.
[17]Ibid. 55.

kill, and die for the entertainment of human beings. To engage in such wanton cruelty conflicts with the animal's completion of its divinely ordained station in life, and therefore "violates God's right in creation."[18] Note that the emphasis is not on a violation of an animal *per se*. Rather, it violates God's sovereign right to create animals that have the freedom to do what he created them to do.[19]

Whatever the *telos* of animals is, therefore, is tied directly to God's intent in creating animals. Did God create animals solely to serve human needs and/or desires? Linzey answers, "Animals are not made simply for human use and pleasure but for God's glory."[20] Clearly, their *telos* is linked directly to God, not to humanity.

This line of reasoning leads Linzey into the discussion of animal rights. According to Linzey, saying that animals have rights means,

> (i) that God as Creator has rights in his creation;
> (ii) that Spirit-filled, breathing creatures, composed of flesh and blood, are subjects of inherent value to God; and
> (iii) that these animals can make an objective moral claim which is nothing less than God's claim upon us.[21]

In this scenario, the animal rights discussion becomes a second order question. The first order question is about who God is and why God created. These are the questions which must be answered if one is to address the questions about animal *telos*

---

[18]Ibid.

[19]Of course, not all environmental suffering comes from humanity. Linzey refers to the apostle Paul's belief that God caused some of nature's suffering simply because he subjected it to mortality and decay. Ibid. 13.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid. 69.

and the proper treatment of animals. Human respect for animals is a direct implication of human respect for God's will.

Therefore, this is not a question about the intrinsic value of animals, but the rights of God and the consequent second-hand (delegated) value of animals (this being the value God has given them by virtue of creating them to do a certain thing). From Linzey's theocentric outlook, animal rights are neither intrinsic to their nature nor conferred upon them by humans. Humans have a God-given duty to show respect to animals precisely because of God's role in the matter, not because of what animals are on their own. Thus, the phrase "animal rights" becomes almost synonymous with "human duty to God with respect to animals" because it is not a human duty to animals *per se*, but a human duty to respect God's intentions for animals. This is the central theme of Linzey's argument.

At first blush this approach may appear to move the animal rights discussion out of the seemingly endless series of attempts to find a particular characteristic which draws the line between human beings and animals (e.g., discursive thought, syntactical speech, a soul, personhood, etc.). Although attempts at line drawing are common fare in the controversy, Linzey takes an interesting turn with the theos-rights perspective.

> Genesis posits what may be termed greater and lesser circles of intimacy with God, and therefore greater and lesser degrees of spiritual freedom, but there is no absolute dividing line between man and beast. Both are created in the same way and similarly blessed . . . Spirit (*ruach*) is the basis of all living, breathing, blood-filled beings in a specific way that is true of man and which cannot be denied to other species.[22]

---

[22]Ibid. 65.

Even though there is no "absolute" line of demarcation between human beings and animals, Linzey allows for levels of capacity for "intimacy" with God. But it is God who draws the lines of intimacy rather than a particular characteristic of animals or humans.

Another important aspect of both animals and human beings which separates them from the rest of creation is that they have Spirit. Linzey says,

> . . . the theos-rights perspective does not locate the value of beings in any faculty or capacity, but in the will of God, which may be deduced from the givenness of Spirit-filled individuals.[23]

Thus, although "all living beings are subjects of value,"[24] because they are God's creations, Spirit-filled beings are of a higher order and have a superior claim on theos-rights because, "only animals which come clearly within the definition of 'Spirit-filled breathing beings composed of flesh and blood' have theos-rights." Thus, it is "the Spirit immanent in creation that gives life and in so doing develops all beings into their particular fullness."[25] The Spirit in all things is somehow at work within each one, helping it to fulfill its *telos*. So, the animal is not intrinsically valuable apart from the significance of the value God places on it, but is in some way seen to be valuable because God gave it Spirit. The deduction that Linzey speaks of, then, is that if a person realizes that God created the animal and made it a Spirit-filled being, she should deduce that it is God's will that the animal be treated with the respect due a creature which God values. This being the case, human beings "can co-operate with God the

---

[23]Ibid. 76.
[24]Ibid. 85.
[25]Ibid. 9.

Spirit in the freeing of creation to be itself for God," e.g., by allowing animal *telos* to determine the nature of humane treatment of animals.[26]

The key notion of Linzey's argument appears to be:

1. Beings which God values are beings which human beings should value.

2. Animals are beings which God values.

3. Therefore, animals are beings which human beings should value.

The argument is valid. It also appears to be axiomatic that if God's will is the ultimate standard of value, and if he values animals, then so should human beings. This is simply a matter of recognizing the supreme court of value. If someone wondered whether her watch showed the correct time, she should check Greenwich Standard Time and set her watch accordingly. Linzey is saying that if human beings want to know what they should value, they must see what God values and set their evaluative norms in accordance with God's will. But deciphering what God's will is in the various situations that arise could be a bit more difficult. It might be fairly easy to decide that if God created animals, then he likely had a reason for doing so. To this end, human beings should value animals as God does. But precisely what God's reason was for creating animals and how that general principle impacts specific questions of whether an ox should be forced to pull a wagon or whether a monkey should be used in cancer research are more difficult matters. Linzey does not seem to have significantly clarified the impact of theocentrism on specific points like these.

---

[26]Ibid. 14.

Therefore, the basis of Linzey's argument is that all things created by God are creatures which he values. If God values something, human beings should also value it. So, human beings should value everything that God has created. But does this position also argue for plant rights (or even "matter rights")? Did God not create the vegetative kingdom for a purpose? Should not the environment have a type of theos-right as well (though not spirit-filled)?

Even if one should allow Linzey's point about God valuing and human valuing, the real question seems to be not whether God values what he creates, but how he values it. According to Linzey, God values his creatures in relation to what he intended for them when he created them, and the job of all creation is to glorify God. If each creature glorifies God by filling its niche, then a tree probably glorifies God by growing and producing its fruit. But note the distinction here. Its primary goal is to glorify God, but it does that by fulfilling its secondary goal of growing and producing fruit.

This being the case, Linzey's argument still allows for lots of uses for animals. Animals could achieve their long term goal of glorifying God when they achieve their short term goal of helping human beings achieve their God-given goals. So, if human beings kill animals for food, shelter, clothing, and medication, or if they use animals to pull plows and wagons, bear burdens, or carry them great distances, why could an animal not fulfill its long range goal of glorifying God by means of its short range goal of serving humanity's needs?

For example, Linzey says that painful experimentation on animals is wrong[27] because "animals have a God-given right to be animals."[28] But depending on a person's understanding of what animal *telos* is, it is conceivable that to value an animal as God values it means that a human being should use the animal in experimentation because to be experimented on is part of what it means to be an animal. Some of the biblical texts clearly set parameters concerning the use of animals to quench every flippant desire, and there are a number of Old Testament commands that forbid mistreating animals. But the texts also allow for many uses of animals which involve animal labor, suffering, and death. Perhaps, therefore, someone could make an argument that experimentation inflicts meaningful harm on an animal which serves to realize the greater good of less human suffering.

However, because they should help meet some of humanity's needs does not logically imply that they must meet either all of humanity's needs or just any of humanity's desires. In a nutshell, simply stating that animals are supposed to glorify God does not rule out the fact that animals can serve human beings under the rubric of glorifying God.

**Linzey And The Catalog**

Linzey uses a variety of biblical texts in his book (seventy-nine are footnoted). But many of the references are not directly related to animals. A lot of them are about topics like God's creating the world, man's tilling the garden, or the potter's having the right to change the clay he is using. He also uses the directly relevant texts about not

---

[27]Ibid. 114-125.
[28]Ibid. 112.

muzzling the ox, a righteous man's caring for his beast, animals fearing human beings, and the leopard's lying with the lamb. Linzey employs far more biblical texts in his argumentation than most authors who write about this topic. But all in all, when one compares Linzey's use of Scripture to the large number of texts in the catalog which have direct relevance to the issue of animal *telos*, his references seem sparce.

The following passages seem to be the texts from Linzey's book which are most intimately related to animal *telos* and thus, the related issue of proper animal treatment: Psalm 36:6; 50:10-11; 104:29-31; 148:9-14; Ecclesiastes 3:19-22; Isaiah 1:11-12; 7:14-15; 11:6-10; 40:5; 66:23; Jeremiah 7:20; Ezekiel 34:24-31; Hosea 2:18-19; Joel 2:21-28; Jonah 4:11; several accounts in the other gospels which parallel Matthew 10:29; Mark 11:15-19; 12:28-34; Luke 12:27; 13:15; John 1:3-4; 6:54-55; Romans 8:19-21, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:39; Ephesians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:16, 20; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 3:20-22; Revelation 21:4. He could have added some important concepts to his argument if he had taken greater advantage of the texts that were available to him, but his book does not clarify his reasons for excluding them.

## JAMES GUSTAFSON

Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman have referred to James Gustafson's work as "the most determinative attack on anthro-pocentrism in modern theology."[29] Linzey also respectfully quotes his work. Gustafson's two volume Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective has some fascinating parallels with Linzey's writings, both in

---

[29]Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, "A Trinitarian Theology of the 'Chief End' of 'All Flesh" in Good News For Animals? Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being, Charles Pinches and Jay B. McDaniel, eds (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):63.

the emphasis on environmental/animal issues, and in the central notion of theocentric ethics. He says that placing God at the center of ethical arguments completely reframes the discussions. By starting his argument with God, the God-given *telos* of animals becomes the central element in his argument.

**Gustafson's Argument**

Gustafson asks how one should construct a system of ethics in which God (not humanity) is the most important consideration. His answer is that any evaluation in such a system would have to begin with God, his values, and his purpose for creating.

> Such an argument would take more purely a theological starting point. What knowledge of God is available to us? What can we affirm with the best arguments we can marshal, about God's purposes for life in the world?[30]

In order adequately to value everything which God created, one must know what God's aim for everything is. In a way, this is essentially the value/God identification argument employed by Linzey, in that God's values should be humanity's values. God's values, which relate to his purposes for creation (creation's *telos*), set the value which human beings should place upon creation. In other words, for the theocentrist, "the center of gravity of affections and of our construing of the world is the Deity . . ." and that implies that her "orientation to God will govern and order the heart in a way nearer to what human life is meant to be."[31] Choosing God as one's center of gravity sets things in a particular order that differs from the results of choosing human beings as one's center of gravity.

---

[30]James Gustafson, Ethics from Theocentric Perspective Vol 1 Theology and Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981):24.

[31]Ibid. 314.

But Gustafson believes that humanity has turned theology on its head in the service of anthropocentrism. If human beings were to acknowledge God as God and his purpose for the universe as the natural guideline for how to treat the planet and its inhabitants, then they would have to agree that "the good for human beings coincides with the ultimate divine purpose."[32] It seems obvious to Gustafson that doing things God's way would be the most beneficial option for all of creation, including humanity. However,

> Culturally, religiously, theologically, and ethically, man, the human species, has become the measure of all things; all things have been put in the service of man . . .[33]

Like Linzey, Gustafson thinks that anthropocentrism has excluded God as "the power and ordering of life in nature and history which sustains and limits human activity" and therefore as the ultimate principle which sets boundaries of acceptable behavior "for the sake of man and the whole of life."[34] Human selfishness has twisted religion, culture, and ethics into its own image. In so doing, humanity's efforts have become counterproductive. Rather than making people happy, the anthropocentric stance has begun to cave in on itself, destroying its own advocates.

Gustafson characterizes his views about nature as fruits of Christianity. But although he realizes that his views do not necessarily represent traditional Christianity, he parts ways with those who think that the Judeo-Christian model is the source of

---

[32]Ibid. 91.
[33]Ibid. 82
[34]Ibid. 84.

the major human problems with the environment and animals.[35] In his opinion, the Christian view of nature says,

> there are limits to proper human action: the belief that the order of nature exists for the sake of man does not warrant license for human beings to do what they please with nature . . . .[36]

But even though Gustafson is sympathetic to Jews and Christians, his discussion does not leave them guiltless. On some points he agrees with those who criticize the Judeo-Christian mindset. He thinks that the standard Christian view regarding human *telos* and the *telos* of nature is that, "The rest of the natural order is purposively directed toward the fulfillment of human life."[37] He rejects this perception and thinks that there is good reason to doubt that "the Deity has so designed all things for man as the chief end of his creation . . . ."[38] People who hold that view need to realize that it is for their own good that they properly relate to the world around them, "to worlds of plants and animals and even to the inanimate features of our planet . . . ."[39]

If human beings are allowed to continue their selfish interpretation of creation, they will ruin the planet and see their own demise due to the "malnutrition, starvation, and other disasters"[40] which they will bring upon it by their abuse. Thus, Gustafson

---

[35]Ibid. 274-275.
[36]Ibid. 91.
[37]Ibid. 92.
[38]Ibid.
[39]Ibid. 95-96.
[40]Ibid. 104.

argues that "limits must be recognized" even from an anthropocentric model or else doom ensues.[41]

Theocentric ethics would rescue both humanity and the planet before things reach the point of no return. Gustafson thinks that some of the current views of "ecological ethics" may detract too much from human dignity and uniqueness in nature,[42] so he tries to take a reasoned approach somewhere between the extremes of exalting human beings too highly on the one hand and romanticizing nature on the other. He thinks that there is a difference between respecting nature and revering nature.[43]

Theocentric ethics requires concentration on the "larger good," and the "good of the whole."[44] This is more than the utilitarian concept of "the most pleasure for the most people," however. It is looking at humanity as one piece of the larger puzzle rather than something apart from, above, or beyond it.

Traditionally, with certain utilitarian ethics, difficulties accrue when one attempts to define "the whole" or the identity of those whose good must be protected. Almost inevitably, the good of some will not be included in the consideration of the group and their needs might be somewhat marginalized. But according to Gustafson, theocentric ethics does not commit this error, since it addresses the group of all groups. It can also honor a hierarchical layering within the whole. It can recognize the uniqueness of humanity, e.g., while maintaining a vision of "the human species in

---

[41]Ibid. 105.
[42]Ibid.
[43]Ibid. 106.
[44]Ibid.

relation to the vast ordering of life which also must, religiously speaking, have some meaning in the purposes of God."[45]

Reminiscent of the Stoic view of nature, Gustafson believes that God has ordered things in such a way that if people will discern carefully, they can discover the ordering. When they discover the ordering, they will discover something of God's will.

> But since we are not given a blueprint of an eternal divine order, and are not given precise commands that are to be obeyed in all circumstances, the divine ordering is discovered in the processes of human experience.[46]

But some of the problems associated with Stoicism also find their way into Gustafson's ethic. For example, discerning God's intended order in a general way is one thing. Figuring out how it applies to specific situations on a practical level can be extremely difficult. That is where Gustafson's detailed account must be examined more closely than is appropriate for this paper.

Thus, humanity must get the emphasis off of self, because "the proper orientation is not primarily toward self but toward God--to the honoring of God . . ." since neither the creation of the world, nor its governance, nor its destiny are under humanity's control.[47] God created the world as an ordered, structured, and hierarchical community. He and his will must be honored. Therefore, his ordering must be honored too.

Gustafson's outlook is something like an integration of all the interrelated ecostructures into one environmental whole. Each ecostructure must be seen in light of

---

[45]Ibid. 109.
[46]Ibid. 245.
[47]Ibid. 110.

its role in forming the aggregate of all ecostructures. The basic theocentric ethical view, therefore, promotes a moral imperative that says, "We are to conduct life so as to relate to all things in a manner appropriate to their relations to God."[48] God is the center of all evaluation, the standard of ethics, and all things are to glorify him (as Linzey also believes). Gustafson suggests,

> The chief end of man may not be salvation in a traditional Christian sense; it may be to honor, to serve, and to glorify (celebrate) God . . . [and therefore] it may be that the task of ethics is to discern the will of God . . . .[49]

His argument, then, is that humanity should not be the central focus of the universe, the earth, or even the animal kingdom. Thus, the *telos* of the animal world is not simply to help humanity fulfill its own *telos*. Both animals and human beings are merely component elements of a much larger *telos* to be fulfilled. Deity's purpose in creating involves a type of aggregate *telos* for all things working together in certain ways and on different levels. Through proper observation, human beings can perceive the interrelations of the whole, i.e., the proper ordering of all things. This being the case, the natural world (including animals) is not necessarily better than humanity, but then neither is humanity (although unique and important in several ways) the most important thing about the physical creation. The Deity's purpose for all of nature, and humanity's role in fulfilling it will take precedence over anthropocentric selfishness. This implies that animals deserve respect and humane treatment.

Gustafson's argument could be stated as:

---

[48]Ibid. 113.
[49]Ibid.

1. If God created the world to fulfill a purpose, then human beings should recognize and incorporate this purpose into the way they treat the world and its inhabitants.
2. God created the world to fulfill a purpose.
3. Therefore, human beings should recognize and incorporate this purpose into the way they treat the world and its inhabitants.

Gustafson's main point seems to be very much like Linzey's, viz., human beings should view animal *telos* the way God views animal *telos*. If it is God's will that animals perform certain duties in the world, then human beings should not hinder them from doing just that. The result of hindering them is that it negatively affects the entire environment. What is God's purpose for animals? Apparently, as Linzey said, all of creation is to glorify God.

**Gustafson And The Catalog**

In the first volume of *Theocentric Ethics* where these topics are discussed, Gustafson talks a lot about the Bible, Christianity, and a great deal about God; but he almost never directly quotes a biblical text. His normal practice is to refer to texts in general ways, mentioning Genesis, creation, dominion, the Decalogue, etc., limiting his biblical references to paraphrases and comments rather than quotations. Of the sixteen passages which he either quotes or directly refers to (Genesis 1:26; 4:17, 20-22; Psalm 19:7-10; Romans 8:28; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:23; 15:44; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 5:19-23; 1 Timothy 1:17; Exodus 3:13-14; 1 Kings 8:27; Job 13:15; Psalm 42:10; 119:97; Isaiah 11:2-3), only the first four in this list are directly related to the animal or nature *telos* issue.

It would have been interesting to have Gustafson's comments on texts like those which claim that God created snakes, frogs, and other animals by the thousands for momentary use then did away with them (Exodus 4:3-5; 7:9-8:32), or the texts which claim that God commanded that animal skins be used in the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:4-5; Numbers 4:1-16), or those which condone the use of animal horns for instruments and vessels (Joshua 6:5; 1 Samuel 16:1), or those where Jesus condones fishing (Matthew 17:27; Luke 5:4-7), or those where Jesus said that animals are not as valuable as human beings in God's sight (Matthew 10:31; 12:12), etc. However, although Gustafson does seem to attempt to use biblical texts at times to validate his views, apparently his purpose in this work is not to present a thoroughgoing bibliocentric ethic, but a theocentric one.

## JAY MCDANIEL[50]

Jay McDaniel, a United Methodist Professor of Religion, has co-edited an oft quoted work, *Good News For Animals? Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being,*[51] and has authored similar works on his own. He thinks that his chapter "A God Who Loves Animals and a Church That Does the Same" in *Good News For Animals?* is the best example of the way he uses the Bible in presenting his case for thinking properly about animals.[52]

---

[50]When asked to name two good examples of Bible/animal advocates actively involved in the discussion today, Andrew Linzey suggested Jay McDaniel and John Berkman. Personal correspondence from Linzey, September 18, 1997.

[51]Pinches and McDaniel.

[52]Telephone conversation with McDaniel, September 20, 1997.

**McDaniel's Argument**

McDaniel observes that "creation-inclusive theologies are now emerging in abundance" which are variously self-described as "theocentric, ecological, environmental, life-centered, ecofeminist, process, creation centered", etc.[53] McDaniel wants to engender a "creation-inclusive Christianity"[54] that is more enviro/animal conscious, and includes animals both in its thinking and in its church life.

Being more animal conscious is a specifically "life-centered" version of a more generally creation-inclusive Christianity, "a specific way of being theocentric" and thus "an alternative to that human centeredness."[55] His emphasis on theocentrism clearly parallels the writings of both Linzey and Gustafson.

McDaniel begins his discussion with an illustration which he refers to several times throughout his argument. It is the story of how he and a few other eco-conscious individuals gathered at a conference center one evening in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. Late that night they went to a quiet place in the wilderness where they howled along with the local wolves. Howling in harmony with the wild animals awakened in McDaniel a deeper awareness of the degree to which human beings are disconnected from the animal world. People need to reunite with animals because as God's presence is in human life, so it is also in creation.[56] This is a familiar theme among Bible/animal advocates as also evidenced in the writings of Linzey and Gustafson. McDaniel says, "The Spirit works in [animals], as in us, at a level far

---

[53]McDaniel 76.
[54]Ibid.
[55]Ibid.
[56]Ibid.

deeper than words."[57] This point shares similarities with Linzey's point that creatures of flesh and blood are "Spirit-filled individuals," i.e., although the entire world has the Spirit in some sense, it seems to have a special proclivity for sentient beings.

Having recognized the disconnectedness which developed out of anthropocentric views of nature, the author worked out what he calls three "reflections." The three reflections are steps that will help "in overcoming our alienation from animals."[58] Step one is to think about God as a being who is like Jesus. That is, God is someone who works in people's lives, has created the universe, wants people to want peace on earth, and forgives sins. Human beings need to think of God in this more expansive way. God wants to have a more intimate relationship with his creation than people commonly think he does. If God is like that, then people should be like that too. Thus, if human beings were what they should be, they would seek peace with all life around them.

Step two is to think that God loves animals and "is with them just as . . . with us."[59] In order to prove this, McDaniel presses the point at great length that when God made the so-called Noahic covenant in which he promised not to flood the entire earth again (Genesis 9:9-11), he made the covenant with human beings, animals, and the earth.[60] He thinks that this "could as easily be called the Animal covenant"[61] because God made the promise to human beings but did not limit it to human beings.

---

[57]Ibid. 91.
[58]Ibid. 86.
[59]Ibid. 87.
[60]Ibid.
[61]Ibid. 90.

He included animals in the covenant. McDaniel thinks that if people would only reconsider concepts like this, it would bring about a more "creation-inclusive reading of the biblical story . . . ."[62] This hearkens back to the value/God identification argument which McDaniel used earlier. That is, if God is so inclusive that he makes a covenant with animals, then people should be this inclusive too. In some ways this resembles the value/God identification argument used by Linzey and Gustafson. If human beings value what God values, they would want a better relationship with animals. Or, if human beings were as inclusive as they should be, they would seek communion with all life around them. This idea will form the substance of step three.

Step three toward connecting with animals is to think more clearly about God's covenant with animals (Genesis 9:9-11). Although McDaniel understands this covenant to be mythical rather than something that literally occurred in history, he finds in the account "a God who is moved to pity by animals and who seeks to enter into deeper relationships with them . . . ."[63] McDaniel's point seem to be that people should focus more on being sensitive to animals' needs and to their plight and focus less on how different they are from animals.

McDaniel believes that if local churches would follow these three steps, they could reshape themselves and begin to involve animals in the way they think about their local congregations. The local congregation can become "a community which includes animals among its inhabitants" and thus, a "mixed community."[64] However,

---

[62]Ibid. 88.
[63]Ibid. 91.
[64]Ibid. 95.

he hastens to add that this does not mean that animals should have the same functions as human beings in the local church. For example, animals do not have to be formal members of the church in order for a church to be considered a mixed community. Nor do animals have to be baptized. McDaniel realizes that people have a certain kind of intimacy with each other that makes possible unique relationships between them which are not possible between them and animals. On the other hand, animals have "forms of goodness and value that humans lack."[65] But this does not qualify them for church membership or baptism.

So, McDaniel is not saying that churches should incorporate animals into their most intimate spiritual relations. But they must begin to think of animals as part of their work. Animals must be viewed as members in at least a more fraternal way than has been practiced traditionally. McDaniel thinks that the outworkings of these ideas will lead to new and better ways of serving the animal community, thus in some measure restoring the connectedness that human beings and animals seem to have lost.

A troublesome aspect of his argument is that McDaniel overemphasizes the covenant that God made with animals in Genesis chapter nine. By repeatedly saying that God is in a covenant relationship with animals, he makes it sound as if it is the same kind of covenant that two people make when they both agree to keep the terms of the compact. If one violates it, the other is free to enact penalties.

---

[65]Ibid. 98.

But in biblical times, there were different types of covenants though the same Hebrew term ברית (b'rith) was used for all of them.[66] For example, a suzerainty covenant was very one-sided. In such covenants, b'rith can have the significance of a promise, a guarantee, or even a statute. In a suzerainty covenant, b'rith loses the significance of an agreement between two parties as in a normal contract.[67] This seems to be the type of covenant enacted in Genesis 9:8-17. The story does not depict God as saying, "I will do this if you will do that. If you do not hold up your end of the bargain, you will be punished and vice versa." Rather, Genesis chapter nine pictures God saying, "I will do this," promising something, and compounding the significance of it by promising it to all of creation.

As far as the story in Genesis 9 is concerned, God is making a promise that the world will not be flooded again in the way it was in the previous chapters. But McDaniel appears to go too far when he says that this covenant represents "the yearning of God for an integral creation . . ."[68] because he ascribes a particular motivation to the promise, a motivation not evident in the story itself. For McDaniel, this shows that God is "moved to pity by animals" and "seeks to enter into deeper relationships with them . . ."[69] but that is a significant bit of speculation rather than exegesis. He is welcomed to his speculation, of course. But it should not be attributed to the story *per se*. Even if the story is only a myth, as McDaniel apparently

---

[66]J. B. Payne, "Covenant (in the Old Testament)," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975):1000-1010.

[67]Ibid. 1002-1003.

[68]McDaniel 90.

[69]Ibid. 91.

believes, historical backgrounds, context, and word definitions have significance even in the interpretation of myths.[70]

Even so, it does seem to be significant that God includes animals in the promise, but it is also ironic that in the same conversation in which the covenant is stated, God has already said (verses 1-7) that animals will begin to fear mankind and that mankind is now allowed to eat animals. That seems to weaken the idea that this covenant with animals shows God's yearning for an integral creation, and wants to enter into deeper relationships with them.

McDaniel describes the human dominion over animals (from Genesis 1) as "an act of kindly stewardship, not exploitation."[71] This idea is remarkably close to Linzey's explanation. Another similarity to Linzey[72] is the way that McDaniel does not outright condemn meat eaters, but encourages voluntary vegetarianism and concludes "for those who are able, the Christian way to bear witness to God's love for animals is not to eat them."[73] He does not say that it is flatly wrong to eat meat. But although there are numerous justifications for being a vegetarian (e.g., health benefits), it seems that if an animal advocate chooses to eat only vegetables because of her God-centered commitment to animals, she is likely saying, "I do not want animals to suffer and die so that I can eat them, and therefore, I refuse to eat meat."

---

[70]Some of this is discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Christianity and the Rights of Animals 141-146. Also consider Linzey's "The Bible and Killing for Food," Between the Species 9 (1993):1-8.

[73]McDaniel 99.

In summary, the flow of McDaniel's chapter is that human beings are disconnected from nature and need to reconnect. Thus, human beings need to realize that animals and human beings share the breath of life, that God loves animals, that the Bible is creation-inclusive, etc. Therefore, the church should be a mixed community (as stated in the title of the chapter: "A God Who Loves Animals and a Church That Does the Same"). The essence of McDaniel's argument is fundamentally the same as Linzey's and Gustafson's.

1. If God loves animals, then the church should love animals.

2. God loves animals.

3. Therefore, the church should love animals.

The argument is valid. But the question left unanswered is: What does it mean for God to love animals? Could God conceivably love them in a way that allows animals to be sacrificed, and used for food, clothing, wagon pulling, etc., or is it only possible that God could love them in a way that forbids these activities? Maybe refusing to eat meat is in effect refusing to honor the *telos* of animals if in fact that is part of the reason they exist. Maybe having a proper love for animals and a proper respect for their *telos* is to remain disconnected from them.

**McDaniel And The Catalog**

McDaniel's twenty-seven page chapter references only four biblical texts (the flood covenant of Genesis 9, creation groaning Romans 8, and two texts about "animal Sabbaths" Exodus 20:10; 23:12) and refers to Isaiah chapter eleven and verses from Genesis chapters one and two without actually citing them. Of course, the passage from which he draws the most is Genesis chapter nine.

If McDaniel is attempting to present the biblical view of animal *telos* or at least how Christians should treat animals, the reader may wonder why McDaniel does not include a few of the many biblical passages which more directly address animal *telos* or some of the many other statements which the texts claim that God made about animals. For example, someone who holds the traditional view of Scripture would ask why McDaniel so often refers to Genesis 9:9-11, but never mentions verses one through eight which appear to contradict the point he draws from verses nine through eleven.

On the one hand, maybe it is because he (like Gustafson) is not attempting to give a thoroughgoing discussion of what the Bible teaches about the subject. But another reason why McDaniel probably does not deal with the Bible in any sort of systematic fashion most likely stems from his process theology which in turn influences his description of the Bible as "a complex anthology from which a 'story' relevant to a people can be woven."[74] Thus, he does not claim to hold the traditional view of Scripture. He is coming from a different paradigm regarding the Bible. From his stance, it makes perfect sense to reference a text which he believed supported his view. Depending on more specific tenets which underlie his views of the origin and nature of the Bible, this approach at least tries to prove that his view falls within the parameters of biblical attitudes about animal *telos*.

If this is his approach, however, and after using so little of the biblical text in his argumentation, McDaniel enigmatically closes the chapter (his next to last

---

[74]Good News For Animals? Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being, Charles Pinches and Jay B. McDaniel, eds (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):102, n. 6.

sentence) with the statement, "What is needed is a church that takes the Bible more seriously."[75] It would have been interesting if McDaniel had explained what he meant by that statement in light of his views about the Bible, and perhaps had commented on how specific Bible texts could be more rigorously applied to animals in the local congregation.

## JOHN BERKMAN

Another leader in the current discussion is author John Berkman who did his doctoral work in Roman Catholic moral theology at Duke University. He thinks that the chapter which he co-authored with Stanley Hauerwas in *Good News For Animals*?[76] best represents his application of the Bible to the topic of proper thinking about animal *telos*.[77]

Hauerwas and Berkman divide their chapter into four parts: possible hazards to the project, a Trinitarian understanding of creation, a glimpse of "living in the way of the Trinity," and "vegetarianism as an eschatological act . . . ."[78]

The first line of the chapter states its goal of seeking "to engage the issue of the relation between 'the world of humans' and 'the world of animals' in the most thoroughly theological manner possible."[79] The authors have apparently seen some works which they believed were not as logically or biblically sound as they should have been. Maybe that is why they think their own biggest hurdle is overcoming the

---

[75]Ibid. 100.
[76]Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, 62-74.
[77]Telephone conversation with Berkman, September 20, 1997.
[78]Ibid.
[79]Hauerwas and Berkman, 62.

temptation to become a "theological mercenary," which is "one who uses theology merely to confirm what many of us have already decided on other grounds."[80]

In a related vein, they criticize writers such as Linzey and Gustafson for making the standard assumptions of anthropocentrism and rights language in their works.[81] However, they realize that "avoiding implicit anthropocentric assumptions is no easy task;" and they are trying to be on guard against committing these errors themselves.

**Berkman's Argument**

Humankind is part of the "community with all flesh."[82] The "only significant theological difference" the authors see between human beings and animals "lies in a unique purpose given to humans by God."[83] Therefore, their *telos* draws the line of distinction between human beings and animals. The unique purpose which God has determined for human beings is "telling animals who they are."[84] Many theologians have supposed that the mark which distinguishes human beings from animals is that human beings are made in image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Traditional views hold that the image of God might be moral awareness, rationality, capacity for speech, etc. Hauerwas and Berkman agree that the image of God is the distinguishing mark. But they disagree with traditional interpretations of the image of God. Actually, they believe that being made in the image of God is this unique purpose of telling animals

---

[80]Ibid.
[81]Ibid. 63, 67.
[82]Ibid. 70.
[83]Ibid. 64.
[84]Ibid.

who they are.[85] Therefore, they connect the image of God to humanity's "deputy status" (the human dominion over creation).[86]

The authors say that one should not begin this discussion with questions about the proper treatment of animals or whether animals have rights. "Instead, the place to begin is with God's creation of the world."[87] In regard to *telos*, humanity is not "the end of all creation," God is.[88] This consideration and the remainder of their basic argument reflect the theocentric arguments of Linzey, Gustafson, and McDaniel. For example, the "chief end for all God's creation" is "to manifest God's glory."[89] Creation "has its own end to glorify God, rather than to serve humans."[90] Thus, the goal of each creature "is not to survive, but to be capable of serving one another . . . ."[91] This implies that the *telos* of animals is not just to serve human flourishing, and that animals are not merely "at our disposal."[92] Rather, all of creation must work together to glorify God (a la Linzey and Gustafson).

The essence of their argument could be stated as:

1. If the purpose of all creation is to glorify God, then humanity must honor it and blend with it rather than manipulating it to serve self.
2. The purpose of all creation is to glorify God.

---

[85]Ibid.
[86]Ibid. 70.
[87]Ibid. 67.
[88]Ibid. 64.
[89]Ibid. 69.
[90]Ibid. 71.
[91]Ibid. 68.
[92]Ibid.

3. Therefore, humanity must honor it and blend with it rather than manipulating it to serve self.

The argument is valid. A problem with the argument is that its terms are too vague. The conclusion is that human beings must honor animals, respect animals, and properly treat animals. But if a person is to honor animals, she or he must behave in certain ways which are not spelled out by this argument.

For example, the authors chide meat-eating Christians because they think the meat eaters bear the burden of proving that it is acceptable to eat animals.[93] But if the biblical texts matter in this discussion, then a number of texts say that both Jews and Christians (including Christ himself) ate animals. At times, the texts say that God and his chosen spokesmen specifically directed people to eat meat (Genesis 9:3; Acts 10:9-16). Thus, the meat eaters can cite biblical examples, implications, and direct statements in their defense and would begin with the relevant texts in order to evaluate concepts such as "violence to animals" (such as the violence involved in killing them for food), whereas perhaps Berkman would begin with the concept of violence to animals and build his argument on that. This again points out the need for clearly setting out ones relevant assumptions and providing adequate definitions of key terms.

It would have been helpful if Berkman and Hauerwas had commented on the verses which they excluded from their discussion, but their chapter does not provide their motivations for doing so. Their response might be that human beings must honor animals, and it seems axiomatic that it is not possible to honor them while eating them.

---

[93]Ibid. 72.

However, if the Creator of animals said that one of the reasons he created animals was for human beings to eat them, would a person honor God by refusing?

**Berkman And The Catalog**

Throughout their chapter, Berkman and Hauerwas use only passing references to Genesis chapters one and two, and a mere mention of Genesis 3:1, Romans 8:19-21, and Isaiah chapter eleven. They tried to explain the Christian, Trinitarian view of creation, but did not carefully show why their view is "the" Christian, Trinitarian view. They did not explain why they selected the texts they selected and did not include others, so the reader is left wondering why. Interestingly enough, of the five texts referenced, only one is from the New Testament, the uniquely Christian documents. Perhaps if either of the two authors had briefly explained his understanding of the nature of the Bible, this would have provided the insight necessary to fully appreciate their conclusions.[94]

## CONCLUSIONS

As one closely reads the animal advocates who claim that their advocacy is the result of properly understanding Christianity and/or the Bible, two distinct patterns emerge. One pattern is that they all lean heavily on similar understandings and implications of theocentricity, although they might not always call it by that name. How much more basic could a theological argument get than to say that if God created everything outside himself, he must have had a purpose for doing so? If he had a

---

[94]When contacted by e-mail and asked about his views on the nature of the Bible, Berkman was wary of misquotes and preferred that his views not be quoted unless authorized.

purpose, it must have been a good one, so people should honor that purpose and treat all of creation accordingly.

Or, in another twist on theocentricity, if God says people should treat animals in a certain way, that is what should be done. After all, if the Creator God is the Supreme Being, and if the Supreme Being says something, it must be correct. The main distinction among the theocentric arguments offered by these authors seems to be in their peripheral ideas such as interpreting the image of God. But the rudimentary concepts and arguments all appear to intersect at the point of theocentricity, that is, start the discussion with God, not with humanity.

A second discernible pattern in these arguments is that the titles of their books and articles refer to biblical notions, thus leading the reader to believe that the writings will contain biblical texts which verify the authors' point of view. But upon careful study of their writings, the reader discovers an extremely limited use of biblical texts. Of course, the writers likely have differing views about the origin and nature of the biblical text which directs their argumentation and the way they employ the text. In some cases, a writer might not even think that biblical texts clearly or accurately depict a fully developed theocentric view. It is not clear, however, whether the average reader will realize this.

Paradoxically, reading the Bible/animal advocates' works, someone might reasonably conclude that the Bible addresses the topic of humane treatment of animals only very briefly, and mostly by implication because even the biblical specialists do not seem to be able to marshal more than a scant number of enlightening verses.

Chapter 4

**Summary and Conclusions**

## CHAPTER ONE

The question which generated this paper is "What does the Bible say about animal *telos*?" Chapter one noted that there are two distinct camps related to this issue. That chapter displayed a number of quotes from environmental advocates who accuse the Judeo-Christian world view of either beginning or greatly encouraging the widespread abuse of animals and the environment in the west. Their arguments contain minimal references to biblical texts and generally use the same few verses. Many of their criticisms begin with Bible verses but quickly move to what the writers perceive to be the traditional beliefs of Judaism and Christianity regarding animals and the environment. That is, they change focus from what they believe the Bible says to how some people associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition have behaved. However, they claim that both the Bible and tradition have been bad for animals.

The other camp in the battle for animals is the group that believes it is precisely biblical teachings that motivate them to work for better thinking about and treatment of animals. This group thinks that if people would only think more like the Bible teaches, the abuse of animals would disappear. Despite their disagreements with the other camp, there are some views which both sides share. They agree that the Bible does not address the topic of animal *telos* and the proper care of animals with sufficient clarity. They agree that the Judeo-Christian tradition as they perceive it has not done nearly enough for animals. Some from the pro-Bible camp even agreed that the perceived traditional Judeo-Christian views were destructive to animals and the environment. There were others, however, who denied that the Bible and the

traditions have been so destructive to the environment and animals. Thus, the problem still appears to be "What does the Bible say about animal *telos*?" and whatever it says, is it destructive toward animals?

## CHAPTER TWO

Chapter two attempted to bring to light some of the deeper reasons why there is so much disagreement among writers about what the Bible says about animal *telos*. These reasons have to do with presuppositions that underlie a myriad of strategic beliefs which compose each person's paradigm. When different paradigms posit different beliefs about animal *telos*, sometimes these differences are not just about animal *telos*, but have to do with questions such as whether God exists, what the Bible is, whether miracles are possible, what a divine revelation would be like and how to identify a legitimate revelation, which hermeneutical principles are appropriate given different views of inspiration, and whether some views of the Bible might be compromised by ethical contradictions. This discussion should help clarify the problems associated with claiming that the Bible says this or that about animal *telos*.

## CHAPTER THREE

Chapter three attempted to summarize and analyze some of the more popular and influential writings in the current controversy about the appropriate role and treatment of animals in order to see how they employ the Bible in their argumentation, what they believe the Bible says about animals, how animal *telos* figures into their thinking, and how well their basic views align with the catalog of relevant texts (Appendix A). Linzey, Gustafson, McDaniel, and Berkman each uses a form of theocentric ethics to make their case, i.e., an ethical system which starts with God (rather than human beings) as the ultimate standard of value. Each writer grounds his argument in the concept of animal *telos*. According to these writers, animal *telos* is

whatever God intended for animals when he created them. The writers agree that God did not create animals solely to serve human beings.

Although none of the four authors used the catalog of relevant verses in an extensive way, the central theme of their arguments appeared to express attitudes which could reasonably qualify as biblical in substance. That is, if God is the standard of what human beings should value, and if God created animals to fulfill a particular purpose, then human beings should respect God's intent and therefore value animals enough to allow them to fulfill their divinely ordained *telos*. Human beings thwart the fulfillment of animal *telos* when they treat animals in ways that conflict with it. Such thwarting of God's plan not only violates God's will, but misuses and abuses animals. The more difficult goal for these four writers to achieve was to make the practical application of this principal to specific situations in the modern world (e.g., animal experimentation, eating animals, and animal labor).

## A CRITIQUE OF THE TWO CAMPS

Those discussed in this paper who criticized the Judeo-Christian model are partly right and partly wrong. They are right to challenge the world's religions to do more to help the problem of animal suffering. They are right to use the Jewish and Christian holy books to make their point forcefully. They are right when they say that some biblical texts teach that there is a qualitative difference between human beings and animals. Even the Bible/animal advocates agree with this. They are right when they say that some Bible texts say that God put humanity in charge of the natural world. The Bible/animal advocates agree with them on this point, although they believe their critics have wrongly interpreted the meaning of this dominion.

However, some of those who have criticized the Judeo-Christian model are wrong about the Bible's originating the idea of ontological superiority of humanity

over animals and/or the strict dichotomy between the two. As chapter one showed, such views have been prevalent in times and places which were untouched by the Judeo-Christian influence. Some of these writers are also wrong when they say that the Bible empowers human beings to treat nature however they wish. As the discussion in Appendix B shows, it is reasonable to conclude that the words translated "subdue" and "dominion" in Genesis 1:28 do not necessarily imply or allow abusive treatment of that which one is commanded to subdue or over which one is given dominion. The catalog proves that some writers are also wrong when they say that the Bible is virtually silent about the *telos* and treatment of animals. Appendix A discusses a large number of biblical texts which directly address a variety of issues about animals.

The Bible/animal advocates discussed in this paper are also partly right and partly wrong. They are right about looking at things from the theocentrist perspective. Once people allow the concept of God as Supreme Being into their explanation of reality, it must reorient many of the reference points for their value judgments. God becomes the standard in that worldview, and it follows that any consideration of value must first pass through the gate of "what would God think about this?" They are right about the Bible's providing certain insights into what animals are and what they are intended to do on earth.

The Bible/animal advocates are wrong about the way they handle the biblical text. They should show more consideration for their readership. For some reasons, several writers do not refer to the majority of texts that address the animal *telos* issue, thus leaving out ideas that could have a significant role in forming their opinions about what the biblical attitudes on the subject are. That is, their use of texts is so selective that it is overly limited, not allowing notable texts to speak to the issue. Each writer

apparently had reasons for selecting some texts and leaving out others. But their readers (including the fellow authors) do not know their reasons for doing so, and therefore, do not know whether they might be legitimate or illegitimate, or whether they agree with their methods. Not knowing the writers' thinking which underlies their text selection makes it difficult either to praise or criticize the way they handle the biblical texts. They could be seriously mishandling the texts, taking them out of context, using them inconsistently with their fundamental understanding of the Bible, etc., but their readers are at a loss to make such important judgments.

The point here is not a matter of just "counting texts," and the writer who cites the greatest number of texts wins the contest. It just seems logical that those who claim to know what a certain book says about a topic should be required to get as much information as possible. When a writer uses only a couple of verses, then without explanation or comment leaves out sections that either add to or flatly contradict their interpretation, that approach seems to be lacking something. It does not automatically mean that their position is false, but those who know the Bible pretty well and read the Bible/animal advocates' arguments will likely be frustrated to discover that the authors give no explanation at all for their approaches. There is no reasoned account in their writings why they or the reader should discount those excluded texts and accept only the ones which they referenced.

Some Bible/animal advocates are wrong to encourage vegetarianism as though it is a more truly biblical attitude toward animal *telos*. The biblical texts themselves do not say that vegetarianism is either right or wrong. In fact, after Genesis chapter nine, it would be an extremely difficult task to find even one vegetarian in the Bible. Some texts talk about unclean meats that should not be eaten under certain conditions, but other texts say that eating meat is a good, divinely ordained practice. It is

precisely the ambiguity of these texts that makes even some writers who hold the traditional view of Scripture reticent to take a more dogmatic stance against eating meat. They feel that since the Bible is unclear about it, people should err on the side of saving animal lives. That seems satisfactory on the surface. But if they are wrong about their understanding of animal *telos*, then they are encouraging people to disobey God by thwarting his plans for animals to serve as food for human beings.[1]

## CONCLUSIONS

One conclusion of this study is that the situation is not as bad as some think it is. On one hand, the Bible is not mute on the subject of animal *telos* and indeed presents a number of direct statements which clearly benefit animals. On the other hand, some texts condone human beings working animals, eating animals, wearing animals for clothing, and other practices which some animal advocates condemn. The texts do not offer an obvious "all or nothing" approach. There are texts which defy both extremes of animals as independent from humanity's needs as well as animals as subservient to humanity's whims. The real question is how to deal with the texts. That is, which texts should a person use to portray a biblical attitude about animal *telos*? Someone might even ask, "Which texts identify the TRUE biblical attitude about animal *telos*?"

This question leads to two additional conclusions of this study. There is no easy way to establish a meeting of the minds between the Bible/animal advocates and their fellow animal advocates who criticize the influence of the Jewish and Christian religions. Both those who criticize the Judeo-Christian model and those who affirm its advocacy of animals agree that animals should be treated better and not just serve as

---

[1]For an interesting discussion of this ambiguity and how a thoughtful Mennonite worked through it, see Comstock, "Pigs and Piety: A Theocentric Perspective on Food Animals."

slaves to humanity's abuses. Thus, there is common ground between the two camps because they both want to help animals. However, they are coming from different places, philosophically speaking, and therefore have different ways of arriving at the same conclusion. One condemns the Bible for degrading animals, and the other thinks the Bible is their divine impetus for saving animals. Both sides quote the Bible (often the same texts) in order to prove their opposite positions. But if both sides are trying to say that they are properly describing what the Bible teaches about the topic (and that does seem to be what they were doing since they quote the Bible in order to prove that their positions are correct) it seems like in some way the Bible should be the plumbline against which their views would be compared. But the problem obviously does not have a simple "let's see what the Bible says" solution. The troubles run much deeper than that. Between them lie barriers of presuppositions about the origins of life, the purpose of life, the distinctions and relatedness of different life forms, etc. How can there be common ground between the two camps when such enormous gulfs divide their prior worldviews?

A related conclusion of this study is that it is also very difficult to establish a meeting of the minds among the Bible/animal advocates camp itself. They apparently experience another set of barriers: conflicting notions of what the Bible is, different views about how the Bible came to be, contradictory notions of what revelation is, divergent interpretive models for understanding biblical texts, etc.[2] Although these writers agree on their basic theocentric approaches, their uses and/or non-uses of biblical texts are far from being consistent with each other.

---

[2]See Chapter Two of this dissertation.

One step the writers could take to find common ground with one another is somehow to clarify their methods by expressing some of their assumptions that directly affect their unity on this issue. Because of the variety of unstated assumptions which underlie so many of the writings on this topic, even simple things like careful definition of terms or brief explication certain presuppositions which underlie their selection of texts would be helpful. This would make it clear why they accept the texts they accept or perhaps why they do not think that it is important to ground their views about "biblical teachings" in the biblical text. This exposure of beliefs would provide some points of reference, some standards of measurement against which their claims about what the biblical texts say could be compared, a level playing field as it were. It would make their methods more available for both interfacing of their shared ideas and for criticism due to possible lack of consistency (given their individual beliefs). It would also give them better opportunity to present their readers with a more overtly consistent, united front in their efforts on behalf of animals, stating their case more definitively and having a greater impact on the readers.

# WORKS CITED

# Works Cited


Achtemeier, Paul J. The Inspiration of Scripture: Problems and Proposals. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980.

Adams, Carol J. Neither Man Nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals. New York: Continuum, 1994.

Adler, Mortimer J. How To Think About God: A Guide for the 20th Century Pagan. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980.

Angeles, Peter. Critiques of God. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1976.

Animal Imagery in the Old Testament: Some Aspects of Hebrew Poetics. Dir. James A. Rimback. University Microfilms International, 1983.

Archer, Gleason L. A Survey of Old Testament Introduction. Rev. Ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1974.

_____. Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982.

Arnobius, "The Seven Books of Arnobius Against the Heathen," Book 7.4. The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ed. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1951.

Augustine. On Christian Doctrine.

_____. Confessions.

Bacon, Francis. Novum Organum.

Barr, James. Beyond Fundamentalism. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.

_____. Fundamentalism. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978.

Barrow, John D., and Frank J. Tipler. The Anthropic Cosmological Principle. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Bartchy, S. Scott. Mallon Xrhsai: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:2. Tubingen: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973.

Beckwith, Francis J. David Hume's Argument Against Miracles: A Critical Analysis. New York: University Press of America, 1989.

Beegle, Dewey. Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility. Ann Arbor: P. Pettengill, 1979.

Behe, Michael. Darwin's Black Box. New York: The Free Press, 1996.

Bigg, Charles. The Origins of Christianity. T. B. Strong, Ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909.

Blake, W. O., Ed. The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Ancient and Modern. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969, orig. published 1858.

Blakely, James, and David H. Bade, The Science of Animal Husbandry 2nd ed. Reston, Virginia: Reston Publishing Company, 1982.

Bloesch, Donald G. Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, & Interpretation. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Blomberg, Craig. The Historical Reliability of the Gospels. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1987.

_____. "The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith: Harmony or Conflict?" Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan. Paul Copan, Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998):114-115.

_____. "The Legitimacy and Limits of Harmonization" Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, Eds. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Bodenheimer, F. S. Animal and Man in Bible Lands. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960.

Boyce, John R., with Christopher Lutes. "Animal Rights: How Much Pain is a Cure Worth?" Christianity Today. September (1985):35-38.

Boyd, Gregory A. Cynic, Sage, or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1995.

Brown, Colin. Miracles and the Critical Mind. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984.

Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, Ed. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.

Bultmann, Rudolf. "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" Existence in Faith. J. Smogden, Ed. and Trans. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964.

_____. Jesus Christ and Mythology. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.

Caird, G. B. The Language and Imagery of the Bible. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980.

Cansdale, George. Animals of Bible Lands. Sydney, Australia: Paternoster, 1970.

Carson, D. A., Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris. An Introduction to the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

Casanova, Judith, John B. Cobb, Jr., Lewis Ford, William Beardslee, and Joseph Deegan, "What Can We Believe About the Bible?" What's A Christian To Do? David P. Polk, Ed. St. Louis: Center For Process Studies, 1991.

Cebik, L. B. Concepts, Events, and History. Washington D. C.: University Press of America, 1978.

Childs, Brevard S. Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Clark, Stephen R. L. The Moral Status of Animals. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Clarke, Adam. The Holy Bible With a Commentary and Critical Notes. Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.

Clarke, J. J. Voices of the Earth: An Anthology of Ideas and Arguments. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1994.

Coleman, Sydney H. Humane Society Leaders in America. Albany: American Humane Association, 1924.

Collingwood, R. G. The Idea of History. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Comstock, Gary. "Pigs and Piety: A Theocentric Perspective on Food Animals." Between the Species Summer (1992):121-135.

Copan, Paul, Ed. Will The Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate Between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.

Craig, William Lane. "The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle." The Logic of Rational Theism, William Lane Craig and M. McLeod, Ed. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1990.

Crook, John. Law and Life of Rome. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.

Crossan, John Dominic. Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography. San Francisco: Harper, 1994.

Daube, David. Studies in Biblical Law. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947.

Davies, Paul. The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

de Vaux, Roland. Ancient Israel. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965.

DeHoff, George W. Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained. Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff Publications, 1975.

_____. Why We Believe the Bible. Murfreesboro, Tennessee: DeHoff Publications, 1966.

Delitzsch, Franz. Commentary on The Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950.

Derr, Thomas Sieger. "The Challenge of Biocentrism." Creation At Risk? Religion, Science, and Environmentalism Michael Cromartie, Ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Douglass, Frederick. My Bondage and My Freedom. Project Gutenberg, 1995.

Driver, S. R. An Introduction to the Literature of the O. T. New York: Meridian Books, 1956.

Dubos, Rene. "A Theology of the Earth." Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology. Ian G. Barbour, Ed. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973.

Duval, R. Shannon Ed. "Slavery." Encyclopedia of Ethics. New York: Facts On File, 1999:250-251.

Edwards, Earl. "The Primary Mission of the Church as Viewed Through the Teachings and Lives of Jesus and His Apostles." Alternative May (1977):1-55.

Edwards, Rem. Reason and Religion: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972.

Emiliani, Cesare, and Shale Niskin. "Letter to the Editor." Science May (1967):738.

Eusebius The Preparation For The Gospel.

Fackre, Gabriel. "Ecology and Theology." Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology. Ed. Ian G. Barbour. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973.

Farbridge, Maurice H. Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1982.

Feenstra, Ernest S. "Letter to the Editor" Science May (1967):737.

Ferguson, Everett. Backgrounds of Early Christianity. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993.

Finkelman, Paul, and Joseph C. Miller, Ed. MacMillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery. New York: MacMillan Reference USA, 1998.

Finklestein, J. J. The Ox That Gored. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981.

Fischer, David Hackett. Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1970.

Flatt, Bill. "The Function of Presuppositions and Attitudes in Biblical Interpretation." Biblical Interpretations: Principles and Practice: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis. F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers, and Timothy D. Hadley, Eds. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986: 62-72.

Flew, Antony. "Miracles." Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Vol. 5. Paul Edwards, Ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1967:346-353.

_____, and Alasdair MacIntyre, Eds. New Essays In Philosophical Theology. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955.

Forell, George Wolfgang. History of Christian Ethics. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.

Fossum, Jarl. "Understanding Jesus' Miracles." Bible Review. April 1994:.

Frear, George L., Jr. "Caring for Animals: Biblical Stimulus for Ethical Reflection." Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.

Freeman, Alan, and Betty Mensch, "Scratching the Belly of the Beast." Animal Experimentation: The Moral Issues. Ed. Robert M. Baird and Stuart E. Rosenbaum, Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991.

French, Richard D. Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

French, William C. "Beast-Machines and the Technocratic Reduction of Life" Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.

Funk, Robert W., Ed. The Jesus Seminar, The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Geisler, Norman L. Ethics: Alternatives and Issues. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971.

Geisler, Norman, and William Nix. A General Introduction to the Bible. Chicago: Moody Press, 1968.

Geivett, R. Douglas, and Gary R. Habermas, Eds. In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Gilby, T. "Slavery." in Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion. Vol. O-Z. Paul Meagher, et al., Ed. Washington, D. C.: Corpus Publications, 1979.

Gilmore, Ralph. "The First Principles of Hermeneutics." The Freed-Hardeman Lectures. Henderson, Tennessee: Freed-Hardeman University, 1986:153-160.

Glacken, Clarence J. "Man Against Nature: An Outmoded Concept." The Environment Crisis: Man's Struggle to Live With Himself. Harold W. Helfrich, Jr., Ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

Gomes, Peter J. The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996.

Gottlieb, Roger S., ed. This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, and Environment. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Green, Ruth Hurmence. The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible. Madison, Wisconsin: Freedom From Religion Foundation, 1979.

Gunkel, Hermann. The Legends of Genesis. New York: Schocken, 1964.

Gunn, Alastair. "Traditional Ethics and the Moral Status of Animals." Environmental Ethics 5 (1983):148-153.

Gustafson, James M. Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Guthrie, Donald. New Testament Introduction. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978.

Habermas, Gary R. The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1996.

Hackett, Stuart C. The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim: A Philosophical and Critical Apologetic. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.

Hagner, Donald. "The New Testament, History, and the Historical-Critical Method." New Testament Criticism and Interpretation. David Black and David Dockery, Eds. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.

Hailey, Homer. A Commentary on the Minor Prophets. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972.

_____. Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.

Haley, John W. An Examination of the Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible. Nashville: B. C. Goodpasture, 1951.

Hare, R. M. "Slavery." Encyclopedia of Ethics. Vol. II. Lawrence Becker, Ed. New York: Garland Publications, Inc., 1992.

Harris, H. F. "Apollonius of Tyana: Fact and Fiction." Journal of Religious History. June (1969):189-199.

Hart, Henry C. The Animals Mentioned in the Bible. London: Religious Tract Society, 1888.

Hauerwas, Stanley and John Berkman. "A Trinitarian Theology of the 'Chief End' of 'All Flesh'" Good News For Animals? Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being. Charles Pinches and Jay B. McDaniel, Eds. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993:62-74.

Hawking, Stephen W. A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988.

Henry, Carl F. H. God, Revelation, and Authority. Waco: Word Books, 1979.

Hick, John. The Metaphor of God Incarnate. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993.

_____. Philosophy of Religion. 2nd Ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.

Hiers, Richard H. "Ecology, Biblical Theology, and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment" Zygon 19 (1984):43-59.

Hippolytus. The Refutation of All Heresies.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. Validation and Interpretation. New Haven: Yale University, 1967.

Holladay, William L. A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971.

Hume, David. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1977.

Hurst, L. D. "New Testament Theological Analysis." Introducing New Testament Interpretation. Scot McKnight, Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989.

International Fund for Animal Welfare. Ethical Concern for Animals: Introducing the IFAW Fellowship at Oxford. Oxford: IFAW, 1994.

Jones, A. H. M. The Greek City From Alexander to Justinian. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940.

Jones, David Clyde. Biblical Christian Ethics. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994.

Jones, Major J. Christian Ethics for Black Theology: The Politics of Liberation. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.

Kaiser, Walter C. "עבד." Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Vol. 1. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

_____. Toward Old Testament Ethics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Kalechofsky, Roberta. "The Animal Rights Movement and Religion." Autobiography of a Revolutionary: Essays on Animal and Human Rights. Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1991.

Kaufman, Gordon D. "Doing Theology From a Liberal Christian Point of View." Doing Theology In Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer. Woodbridge, John D. and Thomas Edward McComiskey, Eds. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

Kaye, Bruce. "The New Testament and Social Order." Law, Morality, and the Bible: A Symposium. Bruce Kay and Gordon Wenham, Ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978.

Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. Commentary on the Old Testament. Reprint Ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.

Kelsey, David. The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.

Kingston, A. Richard. "Christian Duty and Animal Welfare." Theology 71 (1968): 250-256.

Klotz, W. "Domestic Animals and Bible Symbolism." Concordia Journal 7 (1981):144-149.

Kole, Andre, with Al Janssen. Miracles or Magic? Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1987.

Korem, Dan. Powers: Testing the Psychic and Supernatural. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Lawler, J. G. "On the Rights of Animals." Anglican Theological Review 47 (1965): 180-190.

Leahy, Michael P. T. Against Liberation: Putting Animals in Perspective (London: Routledge, 1991.

Leax, John, and James Wolfe. "Intervention, Stewardship and Theocentrism: A Response to Grizzle and Cogdill's 'Subduing the Earth While Tending the Garden.'" Faculty Dialogue Fall (1994):163-70.

Leffingwell, Albert. The Vivisection Question. 2nd ed. Chicago: Vivisection Reform Society, 1907.

Leiser, Burton M. "Slavery." Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics. Vol. 4. Ruth Chadwick, Ed. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998.

Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943.

_____. The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

_____. Miracles: A Preliminary Study. London: Fontana Books, 1960.

Lewis, Gordon R. Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics. Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1976.

Lightfoot. J. B., and J. R. Harmer, Ed. and Transl. The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.

Linzey, Andrew. Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment of Man's Treatment of Animals. London: SCM Press, 1976.

_____. "The Bible and Killing for Food." Between the Species 9 (1993):1-8.

_____. Christianity and the Rights of Animals. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1987.

_____, and Tom Regan, Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

_____, and Dorothy Yamamoto. Animals On The Agenda: Questions About Animals for Theology and Ethics. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.

Long, V. Philips. "The Art of Biblical History." Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation. Moises Silva, Ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Lynge, Finn. Arctic Wars, Animals Rights, Endangered Peoples. Transl. Marianne Stenbaek. Janover: University Press of England, 1992.

MacArthur, John F. Jr. Charismatic Chaos. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.

McKenzie, Steven L., and Stephen R. Haynes, Ed. To Each Its Own Meaning. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.

McKim, Donald K. What Christians Believe About the Bible. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

McDaniel, Jay. "Land Ethics, Animal Rights, and Process Theology." Process Studies 17.

Marshall, I. Howard. I Believe in the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

Mason, Jim. An Unnatural Order: Uncovering the Roots of Our Domination of Nature and Each Other. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Mickelsen, A. Berkeley. Interpreting the Bible. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.

Miller, Donald E. The Case for Liberal Christianity. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

Moreland, J. P., Ed. The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

_____, and Kai Nielsen. Does God Exist? The Great Debate. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.

Morgan, Robert, with John Barton. Biblical Interpretation. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Morris, Desmond. The Animal Contract. London: Virgin, 1990.

Morris, Richard Knowles. "Man and Animals: Some Contemporary Problems." On The Fifth Day: Animal Rights and Human Ethics. Richard Knowles Morris and Michael W. Fox, Ed. Washington, D. C.: Acropolis Books, 1978.

Mounce, R. H. "Bible," Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Walter A. Elwell, Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984:136-137.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. Christ and Culture. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951.

_____. The Meaning of Revelation. New York: Collier Books, 1941.

Nielsen, Kai. Contemporary Critiques of Religion. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.

Niven, Charles. History of the Humane Movement. New York: Transatlantic Arts, 1967.

Nolen, William A. Healing: A Doctor In Search of a Miracle. New York: Random House, 1974.

North, Robert. Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee. Rome: Analecta Biblica, 1954.

Noss, David S. and John B. Noss. A History of the World's Religions. 8th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990.

Oden, Thomas C. After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990.

Osborne, Grant R. The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991.

Pache, Rene. The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture. Chicago: Moody Press, 1969.

Packer, J. I. "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958.

Paine, Thomas. The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology. New York: Freethought Press Association, n.d.

Parmelee, Alice. All the Birds of the Bible. New Canaan, Connecticut: Keats Publishing Company, 1959.

Patterson, Orlando. Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Payne, J. B. "Covenant (in the Old Testament)." The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Vol. 1 Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975:1000-1010.

Perdue, Leo G., Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers. Families in Ancient Israel. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Philostratus. The Life of Apollonius of Tyana. F. C. Conybeare Loeb Classical Library.

Pinnock, Clark. Biblical Revelation: The Foundation of Christian Theology. Chicago: Moody Press, 1971.

Pinches, Charles and Jay B. McDaniel, Eds. Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.

Preece, Rod, and Lorna Chamberlain. Animal Welfare and Human Values. Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993.

Purtill, Richard L. Thinking About Religion: A Philosophical Introduction to Religion. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978.

Ramm, Bernard. Protestant Biblical Interpretation. Boston: Wilde, 1956.

Ramsay, W. M. The Bearing of Recent Discovery On the Trustworthiness of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953.

Randi, James. The Faith Healers. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1987.

_____. Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns and other Delusions. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1982.

Rankin, O. S. "Ecclesiastes: Introduction." The Interpreter's Bible Vol. 5. New York: Abingdon Press, 1956.

Reichenbach, Bruce R. The Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1972.

Regan, Tom, and Peter Singer. Animal Rights and Human Obligations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976.

Rengstorf, Karl Heinrich "δουλος." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol.II. Gerhard Kittel, Ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.

Richardson, Alan. A Preface to Bible Study. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944.

Robinson, J. M. "Hermeneutics Since Barth." The New Hermeneutic. J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb, Eds. New York: Harper & Row, 1974: 1-77.

Rodd, Rosemary. Biology, Ethics & Animals. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

Rodriguez, Junius P., Ed. The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1997.

Rogers, Jack B., and Donald K. McKim. The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.

Rollin, Bernard E. Animal Rights and Human Morality. rev. ed. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992.

Rosner, Brian S. "'Written for Us': Paul's View of Scripture." A Pathway into the Holy Scripture. Philip Satterthwaite and David Wright, Eds. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994:81-105.

Rothschild, Miriam. Animals and Man: The Romanes Lecture. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Rowan, Andrew N. Of Mice, Models, and Men: A Critical Evaluation of Animal Research. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.

Rowe, William I. and William J. Wainwright, Ed. Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973.

Rowley, Francis H. The Humane Idea. Boston: American Humane Education Society, 1912.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "Men, Women, and Beasts." Charles and Jay B. McDaniel, Eds. Good News for Animals?: Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993:12-24.

Salt, Henry S. Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress. New York: Macmillan, 1894.

Sanders, E. P. The Historical Figure of Jesus. London: Penguin Press, 1993.

Santmire, H. Paul. "Is Christianity Ecologically Bankrupt? The View From Asylum Hill." An Ecology of the Spirit: Religious Reflection and Environmental Consciousness Michael Barnes, ed. New York: College Theology Society.

Schaeffer, Francis. He Is There and He Is Not Silent. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1972.

Schultz, Arnold C. "Slave, Slavery." Baker's Dictionary of Theology. Everett F. Harrison, Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983.

Schweitzer, Albert. The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede. New York: Macmillan Company, 1968.

Seneca. Letters From a Stoic.

_____. De Clementia.

Sheldon, Joseph K. "Twenty-One Years After 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis': How Has the Church Responded?" Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 41 (1989):152-158.

Spence, H. D. M., and Joseph S. Exell, Ed. The Pulpit Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950.

Sheppard, Gerald T. "How Do Neoorthodox and Post-Neoorthodox Theologians Approach the 'Doing of Theology' Today?" Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer. John Woodbridge and Thomas McComiskey, Eds. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

Singer, Peter. Animal Liberation. New York: New York Review, 1990.

Smith, Morton. "Prolegomenon to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, the Gospels, and Jesus." Journal of Biblical Literature 90 (1971):174-99.

Sperling, Susan. Animal Liberators: Research and Morality. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Spong, John S. Rescuing the Bible From Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991.

Stafford, Tim. "Animal Liberation." Christianity Today June 1990:19-23.

Stein, Robert H. Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.

Stone, Oliver. "Stone's JFK: A Higher Truth?" JFK: The Book of the Film. New York: Applause Books, 1992.

Stott, John R. W. "Christians and Animals" Christianity Today February 1978:38-39.

Strauss, Richard. The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined. Marian Evans, Trans. New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855.

Swinburne, Richard. The Existence of God. Rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Taylor, Paul W. "The Ethics of Respect for Nature." The Animal Rights/Environmental Ethics Debate. Ed. Eugene C. Hargrove. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Taylor, Richard. Metaphysics. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Thielicke, Helmut. Theological Ethics. William Lazareth, Ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

Thiselton, Anthony C. New Horizons in Hermeneutics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

Tiede, D. L. The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker. Missoula, Montana: 1972.

Tillett, Wilbur Fisk. The Paths That Lead To God. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1926.

Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Toynbee, Arnold. "The Religious Background of the Present Environmental Crisis." International Journal of Environmental Studies 3 (1972):141-146.

Turner, E. S. All Heaven in a Rage. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964.

Urbach, E. E. "The Laws Regarding Slavery as a Source for Social History of the Period of the Second Temple, the Mishnah and Talmud." Zion: Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies. R. J. Loewe Transl. 25 (1960).

Van Dyke, Fred G. "Ecology and the Christian Mind: Christians and the Environment in a New Decade." Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 43 (1991).

Vanhoozer, Kevin. "God's Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today." A Pathway into the Holy Scripture. Philip Satterthwaite and David Wright, Eds. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994:143-181.

Virkler, Henry A. Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.

von Rad, Gerhard. "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch." The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays. London: SCM, 1984.

Wall, James M. "An Uncaged Vision of Nonhuman Creation" The Christian Century October 1989:947-948.

Wellhausen, Julius. Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel. New York: Meridian, 1957.

Wenham, David. "Source Criticism." New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods. I. Howard Marshall, Ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

Wenham, Gordon. "Law and the Legal System in the Old Testament." Law, Morality, and the Bible: A Symposium. Bruce Kay and Gordon Wenham, Ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1978.

White, Jr., Lynn. "Continuing the Conversation." Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology. Ian G. Barbour, Ed. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1973.

_____. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." Science March 1967:1203-1207.

White, R. E. O. Biblical Ethics. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979.

Wilkins, Michael J., and J. P. Moreland, Eds. Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

Williams, A. Lukyn. "St. Matthew." The Pulpit Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950.

Wink, Walter. The Bible in Human Transformation. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973.

Wolfe, David L. Epistemology: The Justification of Belief. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1982.

Wood, J. G. Bible Animals: Being a Description of Every Living Creature Mentioned in the Scriptures, From the Ape to the Coral. New York: Vantage Press, 1876.

Woodbridge, John D. Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.

Woodbridge, John D. and Thomas Edward McComiskey, Eds. Doing Theology In Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.

Wright, Christopher J. H. Walking in the Ways of the Lord. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Young, Edward J. Thy Word is Truth. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957.

Young, Richard A. Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and Their Solutions. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994.

Zeuner, Frederick E. A History of Domesticated Animals. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

# APPENDICES

Appendix A

## The Catalog of Relevant Texts

Over the years, several authors have written books about animals which appear in the Bible. Some popular works date back to the nineteenth century.[1] Some were authored by bird lovers and thus emphasize birds[2] and some emphasize archaeology, like the one written by a zoology professor at Hebrew Union in Jerusalem.[3] There are even books about animal metaphors in the Bible.[4] But none of these books deal with animal *telos* thoroughly. They are largely descriptive in nature, helping the western reader better to understand what some of the animals mentioned in the Bible are like. Similar works generally assume more about animal *telos* than they explicate from the biblical texts they employ.

The information in this Appendix, however, tries to maintain a steadfast focus on animal *telos*. The information in this Appendix comes from a page by page study of the Bible, searching for statements that relate to attitudes about animal *telos* which are expressed there.

---

[1]See J. G. Wood, Bible Animals: Being a Description of Every Living Creature Mentioned in the Scriptures, From the Ape to the Coral (New York: Vantage Press, revised edition 1876); Henry C. Hart, The Animals Mentioned in the Bible (London: Religious Tract Society, 1888).

[2]Alice Parmelee, All the Birds of the Bible (New Canaan, Connecticut: Keats Publishing Company, 1959).

[3]F. S. Bodenheimer, Animal and Man in Bible Lands (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960).

[4]Maurice H. Farbridge, Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970); compare the film by James A Rimback, "Animal Imagery in the Old Testament: Some Aspects of Hebrew Poetics" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983).

The Bible does communicate attitudes in relation to animal *telos*, and those attitudes are not always so detached from animal welfare as some writers have claimed (see chapter one). However, these more benevolent attitudes are not communicated in a brief series of staccato commands such as "thou shalt treat animals thus and so" and "thou shalt not treat animals in this way and that way." There is, therefore, no "Book of Proper Animal Care" in the Bible. There are several direct commands about caring for animals, but there also seems to be certain ever-present, deeply ingrained, underlying attitudes about animal life on a larger scale.

Animals are not discussed on every page of the Bible, but it is startling how frequently they are there. Oftentimes they appear on numerous consecutive pages. Some of those mentioned repeatedly are the bird, swallow, eagle, crane, partridge, vulture, pelican, dove, ostrich, insect, worm, locust, scorpion, beast, antelope, bear, flock, sheep, goat, lamb, dam, ram, fox, lion, whelp, ass, ox, camel, dromedary, horse, steed, wolf, leopard, snake, serpent, adder, cattle, heifer, calf, herd, jackal, hind, porcupine, creeping things in general, and so on. There are in fact almost one hundred and eighty Hebrew words and more than fifty Greek words for animals in the Bible, resulting in about one hundred and fifty animal names in the American Standard and Revised Standard versions.[5] Interspersed throughout this variety are precise distinctions between the behavior patterns of young and old members of certain species as well as differences between the father, mother, and offspring of some species. The two most mentioned animal groups by far are sheep (occurring more than four hundred times with twelve different Hebrew names) and cattle (occurring more than four hundred and fifty times with ten different Hebrew names).[6]

---

[5]George Cansdale, Animals of Bible Lands (Sydney, Australia: Paternoster, 1970):13.
[6]Ibid.

Animals conspicuously figure into the Bible story in a vastly significant way. They are teachers, pets, food, clothing, workers, wealth, and very often are the key to a story line. In fact, it is not unusual for an animal to be the turning point in events that change biblical history. For millennia animals played a vital role in maintaining a harmonious relationship between human beings and God. Animals serve many functions in the biblical story. As they are so important in the playing out of Bible history, there are many opportunities to see what type of attitudes biblical texts present about animal *telos*.

## METHODOLOGY

This Appendix consists of a catalog of biblical texts which lend some degree of understanding to an overall picture of biblical attitudes of animal *telos*, along with very brief comments on the relevance of each text. Of course, reading this Appendix is no substitute for poring over every verse of the Bible where animals are mentioned. Part of the insight into the Jewish and Christian mindset that comes from searching the Bible in that way is missed by not seeing case after case after case after case where animals are discussed. However, insights about the biblical view of animal *telos* which are gained from reading this Appendix are far greater than those gained by reading an article that mentions only a couple of texts.

Guidelines for the Catalog:

1. Which texts to include: Catalog only those texts which help clarify biblical attitudes of animal *telos*. The goal of the catalog is not to compile a list of every text that merely mentions animals.

2. What order to follow: Catalog the texts in the order they occur in the English Bible arrangement, i.e., begin the catalog at Genesis and end at Revelation.

3. Which underlying historical/critical philosophy to employ: A problem arises when anyone in an academic atmosphere attempts to write a document that claims to set forth "what the Bible says" about certain topics, because there exists such a spectrum of beliefs about what the Bible is and how it came to be. For example, some scholars think that the Pentateuch was written by one author, possibly with small contributions by another author, but resulting in a harmonious unit of thought. Other scholars think that the Pentateuch was less of a unified account from one author and more of a patchwork effect. They believe that the Pentateuch was written by at least four different people and edited together into a single document. Still other scholars think that the Pentateuch was written by many authors (as many as thirty-nine separate sources).[7] This is just the beginning of theories about the nature of the Pentateuch. There is a similar spectrum of theories about the remainder of the Bible. This fact could prove detrimental to a paper which sought to prove one of these theories and further sought to prove that within the boundaries of that theory, the Bible teaches thus and so and animal *telos*. But the present paper is a philosophical attempt to search the Bible and compile a catalog of texts relevant to animal *telos* so that a person can look at it and see whether views like those held by White, Singer, Dubos, Linzey and others on both sides of the controversy can be justified by the biblical text. That is, if Singer says that the Bible says thus and so about animal *telos*, then he should be able to prove that claim from the catalog. Conversely, someone who disagrees with Singer on his view could compare it to the catalog and say essentially, "Look, that view is not here at all. But here is a text which says just the opposite of what you said." If this paper

---

[7]Gleason L. Archer A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974):81-164.

catalogs the biblical texts which suggest certain attitudes about animal *telos*, it will at least be successful to that extent.

But how does this translate to those who hold differing views along the spectrum of beliefs about the nature of the biblical text? For example, if someone who holds a fragmentary view of the Bible should find a text in the catalog that contradicts their understanding of what the Bible says about animal *telos*, she might react differently to that information than would a person holding a unity of Scripture view. The fragmentary theorist might say that the troublesome text is in a section that another person wrote, and thus it is understandable that there would be contradictory views in the Bible. But the person holding a unified view of the Bible would attempt to harmonize what that text says with other biblical texts, assimilating them into a holistic viewpoint as if there is a single view of animal *telos* in the Bible that incorporates all of those attitudes. Or, a person who comes from a background in process theology might react by saying, "I can see a progression of thought about animal telos throughout the biblical story. That progress continues unto today, so that we have learned a lot more about animal *telos* since the book of Genesis was written." Thus, it would not trouble this person to find that there are different attitudes about animals expressed throughout the Bible. But none of these views along the spectrum of beliefs about the nature of the Bible should be affected negatively by what this Appendix attempts to do. Likely, all would be happy to see that the references have been cataloged and would find it useful to further the discussion about animal *telos* in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The information is simply cataloged here, and a person's assumptions will lead her to use the information accordingly.

Thus, this catalog will not assume one particular philosophy of the text, but will simply try to collect the relevant texts and make note of attitudes expressed in

those texts. Therefore, the goal of this paper is not to solve the classic issues discussed for centuries by scholars in the fields of lower and higher criticism. This paper is only looking for the attitudes which are set forth in the Bible about animal *telos*.

Since there are different genres of literature in the Bible (such as poetry, prose, or apocalyptic), it will be advantageous to recognize them since sometimes they can have an impact on how one should understand a text. A psalm might say, "I am a worm, and not a man." But this is understood to be figurative language. Cases like this warrant recognition of the different modes of literature that occur in the Bible.

4. How to incorporate texts with similar information: Once a text makes a relevant point, do not list separately every additional text that makes that same point. The first instance is enough unless similar passages add details to the information provided by the first text. The clearest and most informative of the related texts may be referenced, but only briefly.

For example, there are a number of texts where people ride animals. Citing every one of them is unnecessary to establish the point, so use only the first. If other texts which occur later in the Bible provide further insight into riding animals, they may be included in a brief way. But do not list them separately. Put them with the first instance so that relevant texts that deal with the same topic will be together.

5. How much commentary to add to text listings: Limit comments on each text to extreme brevity, not exceeding two short paragraphs in most cases, except where particularly significant topics arise (e.g., sacrifice, metaphor, dominion, etc.). In those few cases, additional comments will be footnoted and relegated to appendices located at the end of the paper.

6. Which version of the Bible to use: Use the American Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted because it is commonly recognized as the most literal of the English translations. This allows for less commentary and interpretation to come between the reader and the original languages.

7. Significance of the three Bible religions: Divide the Bible into three sections based on the three religious dispensations it portrays. It is important to distinguish between the three because although animals generally maintained the same station in the daily lives of the people through Bible history, animals also played significantly different roles in each of the three major religions.

The Patriarchal period covers the events from creation until the nation of Israel arrives at Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt. God spoke directly to the fathers of families (Adam, Noah, Abram, Isaac, et al.) and the fathers offered sacrifices (often animals) on altars as petitions or praise to God. Although God did not give an extensive written law code at this time, he verbally directed the Patriarchs in many practices, including sacrificial offerings.

The Mosaic period covers the events from God's revealing the law at Mount Sinai until the death of Jesus. The Mosaic law consisted of written statutes which prescribed the sacrifice of large numbers of bulls, goats, sheep, and doves, as well as certain grains on a regular basis.[8]

The Christian period covers the events from the death of Jesus to the close of the book of Revelation. During this period, Christian doctrine abolished animal sacrifice and superseded it with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Obviously, the Mosaic law system where animals are offered as sacrifices (to be divided, burned,

---

[8]It would be interesting to read descriptions of how the person offering the sacrifice reacted during the act. But their thoughts, facial expressions, angst, etc., do not find their way into the text.

eaten, etc., in very precise ways) could engender certain feelings about animals which could be changed to some extent by the Christian system where that was no longer required.

7. Keep contextual considerations in mind. For example, who says what to whom? Who is it who is treating the animal in some way? Does the text claim that a particular statement is a direct command from God, or just the ranting of a bloodthirsty warrior? Unless the context receives a high priority, the reader will fall prey to a view held by Desmond Morris. "One of the great weaknesses of the Bible is that, between its covers, it is possible to find a quotation to justify almost any attitude."[9]

In connection with this, reasonable application of the texts message must also be considered. For example, just because a text says that God told Abram to split animal carcasses and lay them out in rows so that he and Abram could make a covenant (Genesis 15) does not necessarily mean that it would be a good thing to do today. But it is clearly a claim that God commanded the deaths of animals for such a purpose and therefore, a text like this could be used to show that killing animals in that situation was not viewed as a sinful act. That would add a bit of information to the sum of biblical texts which address the idea of animal *telos* without necessarily condoning similar actions today.

## THE CATALOG

### I. Patriarchal Period

**GENESIS**

---

[9]Desmond Morris, The Animal Contract (London: Virgin, 1990):34.

The first two chapters of Genesis clearly imply that the earth was made primarily for human habitation. As the book of Isaiah said, the earth was made to be inhabited. (Isaiah 45:18) Aside from the Genesis account, nature has led some scientists and philosophers to an "anthropic principle," i.e., nature appears to center around and focus upon human needs almost as if that were nature's goal.[10]

Man was placed in the environment on the sixth day of creation. But just as God thought that it was not good that man be alone and thus created woman to be with him, so he also apparently thought that it was not good for the humans be alone on the planet with vegetation as the only non-human living things. Genesis chapter one describes a great diversity of living creatures on the earth, in the sky, and in the sea.

But since the biblical texts says that God spoke directly to the family heads at this time, and that no written law was given during this time, no one really has a compendium of all that these believed about animal *telos*. They surely had such beliefs and some inferences might be drawn from the way they cared for animals, but their beliefs were not explicitly included in the book of Genesis. Later in the Bible, however, many directions for dealing with both animals and earth are recorded in written laws.

**Genesis 1:1-31** The order of creation progresses from simple to complex, and probably says something about the primacy of human over animal. For example, on the first three days, the physical habitats were created, then on the next three days the beings were created to inhabit them.

---

[10]William Lane Craig, "The Teleological Argument and the Anthropic Principle," in The Logic of Rational Theism, ed. William Lane Craig and M. McLeod (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1990); John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, The Anthropic Cosmological Principle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

The first life form was created on the third day, and it was vegetative life. The higher creatures were created only on the fifth and sixth days. Both land animals and human beings were created on the sixth day, but humans were created last. Was this the crowning act of all creation? If so, incremental steps were being taken up the ladder of ontological status.

Although God pronounced the things he had created as "good" even before humans arrived on the scene, they apparently were not good enough or he would not have continued creating. Perhaps that is why, after God created the humans on the sixth day, the text says, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" with the addition of the modifier "very." From the outset it seems obvious that the entire story is going to center around humanity.

**Genesis 1:26-27** God created human beings in his image and after his likeness. Even without the theological discussion of what the *imago Dei* is, this is surely something which sets humanity apart from the rest of the creaturely world. It is said of humans only.

**Genesis 1:28** God tells Adam and Eve to subdue the earth and to have dominion over its creatures. This is unquestionably the most controversial passage in the discussion about animal *telos* today. Clearly, humanity was given dominion and was to subdue the earth. Less clear is exactly what these terms mean in detail.[11]

**Genesis 1:29-30** In the beginning, neither people nor animals were meat eaters. God told Adam and Eve that all of the trees and herbs were given to them for food. Is it God's ideal for creatures to be vegetarians? Since the purpose for the vegetarianism is not spelled out in the text, one must be careful about reading an

---

[11]For more on dominion in this text, see Appendix A.

assumption into the text. People offered animals as sacrifices not long after this. Was that the ideal as well?

**Genesis 2:7** Although God made all of the animals from the ground, and although they all have the breath of life (6:17; 7:15), after God made man from the dust of the ground, he was pictured as actually breathing into man's nostrils before he became a living soul. Inasmuch as the text does not picture animal life coming about in this way, the breathing into the nostrils to give the breath of life is unique to humans. The phrase "living soul," however, could better be translated as "living creature" since it applies to both humans and animals, and does not seem to denote the metaphysical part of man often referred to as the soul. (1:20, 24; 2:19)

**Genesis 2:8** God planted a garden (Eden) and put man and woman there. No mention is made of God putting animals there, but subsequent verses make it clear that they are. The story centers on humanity, however, and the garden's purpose seems to have been primarily a living space for human beings.

Alas, even in paradise a man must work. God told Adam to till and keep the garden. (v. 15)

**Genesis 2:18** Woman was made for man as a suitable helper because it was not good that he was alone and the animals did not fulfill his need for companionship. Interestingly, woman was made from man's side, not from the ground like everything else. (2:21-23)

**Genesis 2:19-20** Adam named the animals. This may have been part of his role of ruling over them.

**Genesis 3:1** Satan used a serpent to tempt the woman. The text says that the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature. At this point in time this particular serpent is apparently capable of syntactic speech and discursive reasoning.

Whether all serpents were capable this is pure speculation, but it could provide an interesting hurdle for someone who thinks that the distinguishing trait between human beings and animals is syntactic speech. Much later in biblical history, an ass spoke to his master, but not of his own accord. The text says that God had something to do with it. (Numbers 22:28; 2 Corinthians 11:2) Perhaps the same situation is to be understood with this case. The text implies that Satan was behind it. Of course, the serpent became a symbol for evil activity as in the book of Revelation where Satan was pictured as a dragon or serpent several times (e.g., Revelation 12:3 ff.).

**Genesis 3:13** The woman blamed the serpent for beguiling her into eating the forbidden fruit. It is intriguing that she blamed an animal for her sin, whereas if Satan had controlled the serpent, the deception of Eve was not a voluntary act on the serpent's part. The issue of moral culpability also figures into the serpent's punishment.

**Genesis 3:14-15** God punished the serpent for its role in tempting Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. God said that the serpent would be cursed above all cattle and wild animals, and would henceforth move on its belly and eat dust. Then there is the statement that God makes about how the serpent and Eve's seed would have enmity against one another. Without addressing the theological issues raised here, regardless of what the enigmatic statement refers to, a consequential wedge is driven between human beings and at least one species in the animal world. But if the snake was only a pawn, why punish it? See the related comments in Genesis 9:9-17; Exodus 7:18 ff.; and 19:12-13.

**Genesis 3:21** After Adam and Eve sinned, God used animal skins to clothe them (cf. Hebrews 11:37). Since God only does what is right, it is at the very least not *intrinsically* wrong to use animal skins for human clothing under some conditions.

That does not necessarily license every manipulation of animals for this end, nor does it necessarily condone the wearing of furs for social status.

It also is not clear whether these animals died naturally or whether they were killed. If they were killed for their skins, then this is the first biblical situation in which animals suffered for something humans did. Insofar as this event calls attention to the fact that "innocent" creatures suffered because of human wrongdoing, it also resembles the use of animals as sacrifices, although as sacrifices their deaths are more vicarious in nature. Using animal skins for clothing became a common practice, particularly among the Bedouins. Jesus said of John the Baptizer that no one born of woman is greater. (Matthew 11:11) Yet, John wore camel's hair and a leathern girdle and ate locusts. (Matthew 3:4) Of course, maybe John had a strict policy of wearing only the skins of animals who had died of natural causes.

**Genesis 4:2** Abel, one of Adam and Eve's sons, was a keeper of sheep. At this extremely early period in Bible history, sheep were being kept in groups or herds, had someone in charge of their safety and general well-being, and were being domesticated much as they are today.

It might seem odd that although at this point people were apparently vegetarians (compare Genesis 1:30 and 9:3), they kept flocks of sheep and cattle. Thus, they were not keeping animals so that they could eat their flesh; animals served in a variety of capacities short of being food. For example, they could provide dairy products, labor, companionship, safety alarms, clothing (leather, wool, etc.), sacrifices, transportation, earthy lessons in life, bartering power (Proverbs 27:26), etc.

Genesis 4:20 says that Jabal was the father of those who dwell in tents and who have cattle, so he was well known for having domesticated animals and must have had a big impact on the practice. Following Jabal's lead, farmers and other well-to-do

ancients kept large numbers of animals. Nabal had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats (1 Samuel 25:2). Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots (1 Kings 4:26). Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep herder and gave the king of Israel the wool of a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams (2 Kings 3:4). Arabians brought gifts of seven thousand seven hundred rams, and seven thousand seven hundred he-goats to Jewish king, Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:11). Obviously, corporate America did not introduce the idea of keeping and/or processing large numbers of animals. Mechanization has only increased its ability to multiply what was already being done for several millennia.

**Genesis 4:4** Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and their fat portions for an offering to God, and God "had regard" for it. Very early in biblical history, animal sacrifices were given to God and accepted by him. There are no specific instructions for this act recorded in the text. It also may be significant that God "had no regard" for the offering of Cain (Abel's brother), and that may have been precisely because his was not a blood offering but was taken from the fields.[12] In this fascinating precursor to the rivalry between cattlemen and dirt farmers, God favored "the cattlemen." But the acceptability of Abel's sacrifice may have been because the matter of faith was involved here, not simply because it was meat versus vegetation (Hebrews 11:4).

**Genesis 6:7** God looked at how sinful the world had become and decided to start over by blotting out man and beast from the earth. Why go through a flood to accomplish this? A flood of global proportions precipitated by the sins of humanity would also decimate the animal world. It is not as if the animals had done anything to deserve being wiped out. Human beings evidently deserved the destruction, but they

---

[12]For more on sacrifice, see Appendix B.

dragged the animals down with them. Since God took this action, this event could have implications on animal *telos* because it pictures how God viewed the value of animals and their purpose for being on the planet. Could it be that if there are no people, there need be no animals? Are animals only here because they serve humanity, or is there more to this text?[13]

**Genesis 7:13-16** All eight people and all of the selected animal pairs entered the ark and lived together quite harmoniously. The human beings were in charge of both gathering[14] and caring for the animals, but human and animal were all being saved together.

**Genesis 8:1** God remembered Noah, all the beasts, and all the cattle that were in the ark and started drying up the flood. Note that God did not solely remember the humans. The Bible could have just said that God remembered Noah and his family, but the text specifically says that he also remembered the animals. This does not necessarily erase the ontological hierarchy established in Genesis chapter one, but it should increase one's appreciation for the status that animals are given in the text.

**Genesis 8:6-12** After the rains stopped, the ark drifted. Noah sent a raven out, and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up. He had seven pairs of ravens on the ark as God had specified. In this situation a bird served human needs, but only because the bird did what birds naturally do. Noah did not train the bird to do anything out of the ordinary. It was not a slave to human desires, but served them in a very natural sort of way. When Noah first sent out a dove to see if the waters had subsided, it returned to the ark. He put forth his hand and brought her into the ark

---

[13]For more on animals suffering because of human sin, see Appendix C.

[14]There may be an implication in Genesis 6:20 that God somehow compelled the animals to come to Noah.

with him, picturing a beautiful type of symbiosis between humans and animals, both helping each other to survive.

Noah waited for a week, then sent the dove again; and it brought back a freshly picked olive leaf. After another week Noah sent the dove again and she did not return. A single dove was out in the world alone for a while to serve both human and animal.

**Genesis 8:17** God said to get all of the animals out of the ark so that they could breed and multiply.

**Genesis 8:20-21** The first thing Noah did when he got out of the ark, possibly after letting the animals out, was to build an altar to God for which Noah took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt sacrifices on the altar. They had brought seven pairs of each of these on the ark, not just one pair as was the case with some animals. The text says that the odor of the sacrifice was pleasing to God. Even with animals in short supply, as part of a righteous man's worship, God accepted the burning of an animal as a good thing.

**Genesis 9:1-3** This text is a watershed in the history of human and animal relations, and is often quoted in the controversy today. God blessed Noah and his sons, told them to be fruitful and multiply as the animals were to do, and then said, "the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon" birds, beasts and fish, and "into your hand they are delivered" (cf. 2 Peter 2:12).

In what sense was this intended? Verse three may explain the meaning. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you." Formerly, God had permitted people to eat only vegetables, but now they could become meat eaters with divine approval.[15] Saying that people may eat meat, of course, does not necessarily condone

---

[15]For more on eating meat, see Appendix D.

all torturous means of producing and marketing livestock. But the essential act of eating meat would not be intrinsically wrong if it has divine approval.

**Genesis 9:5-6** God established capital punishment in this text. Among other things, however, he said, "for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man." He went on to say that this reckoning is necessary because humans beings are made in God's image. Even at this early point in the Bible, there is the insight that if animals do certain things to humans that would be wrong for humans to do (although not an exact equivalent in the sense of the animal being fully *morally* culpable) is analogous to a human doing it - so much so that it requires the animal to be killed for it. Taking a murderer's life is understandable to some people, but why punish an animal, which many people think is incapable of the ideas, passions, and premeditations that motivate a free moral agent to murder?

For one thing, maybe there is evidence not yet understood which will prove that animals are moral agents, and therefore deserve punishment to some extent. Second, as is the case throughout the Bible, one of the fundamental jobs of animals is to teach people crucial lessons about life, death, and redemption. Third, one might speculate that killing a human being is so atrocious that either, (1) it manifests a callous attitude toward human life which could encourage people to have a similar attitude, and/or (2) in order to display graphically the severity and heinous nature of taking a human life, the punishment must be carried out even against animals in order to provide a deterrent for humans. The text does not specifically answer the "why" question, and therefore such explanations are speculative.

Notably, however, nothing is said about capital punishment for human beings or animals killing animals because the biblical text never says that animals were made in God's image, which the text says is the reason for the "capital punishment." The

Mosaic law holds a view that resembles this when it says that if someone killed a beast, they must make it good to the owner by repaying him appropriately. But if someone killed a man, he would be killed (Leviticus 24:21).

This text could also foster a very interesting discussion of how animals can serve as good and bad examples for humans and/or the impact of seeing people or animals doing certain things and going unpunished. For example, could some people use this as an encouragement to execute people who are mentally incompetent for killings they have committed, since animals were to be killed for taking a human life and yet they are commonly thought of as "mentally incompetent" when compared to human beings?

**Genesis 9:9-17** God made a covenant not to destroy the earth by water ever again. He made the covenant with Noah, Noah's sons, all of their descendants, and with every living creature that is with Noah (birds, cattle, and all that came out of the ark). The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. God made the sign of this covenant the rainbow, and said that when it rained, human beings would see the bow and remember the covenant.

One wonders in precisely what sense the covenant was made with animals? Is it simply a formality? An agreement? A promise? Whatever it means, surely there is some significance to God's making an agreement or promise with the animal kingdom (see also Hosea 2:18).[16]

**Genesis 10:9** Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord. this is virtually all that the biblical text says about Nimrod. He was the first man in the Bible renowned

---

[16]As will be seen in chapter three, Linzey, McDaniel, and others find considerable food for thought in this text.

for hunting and killing animals. However, the text does not actually condone what he did. It simply records it as a fact of history.

**Genesis 12:16** Pharaoh had sheep, oxen, donkeys, camels, and servants. Although Abel was described as keeping sheep, this text is the first explicit biblical account of animals (and servants) being reckoned as a part of a person's monetary property.[17] There are many, many examples of this (30:43; 32:5; 34:23, 28-29; 36:6-7; 45:10; 46:32; 47:1; 50:8 are only a few). In keeping with this practice, the Mosaic law later specified that a man must not covet his neighbor's donkey or ox (Exodus 20:17).

On one occasion, Abimelech gave Abram gifts which included animals and servants (20:14). Genesis 13:2 says that Abraham was a wealthy man, being very rich in cattle, silver, and gold. He and his nephew Lot had herdsmen too and owned so many flocks that they could no longer live together (13:6-7; see a similar situation in 36:7).

This was everyday life for the ancient Jews. Someone might not have a lot of cash, but animals were very valuable commodities as they are today in most places. Bartering with animals was as common as paying for something with cash (Ezekiel 27:14, 21). Dowries regularly included animals, as when Isaac sent ten camels and choice gifts to bargain for a wife (Genesis 24:10). The servant who delivered the dowry and represented Isaac and his father Abraham bragged to the potential father-in-law about how wealthy Abraham was by referring to his cattle and other belongings (24:34).

---

[17]Does the Bible condone slavery? See Chapter 2.

Jacob attributed such riches to God's blessings (33:11), and God blessed Hezekiah with many flocks, herds, and other items (2 Chronicles 32:29). Job had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses (1:3), a very wealthy man. But after disaster took all of these animals from him, God gave him twice as many as before (42:12).

God also knew that many of the animals he blessed people with would serve human beings and that many would die. God said, "I gave these lands to Nebuchadnezzar and the beasts of the field to serve him" (Jeremiah 27:6). Moses said, "Jehovah gives you butter of the herd, milk of the flock, fat of lambs, rams and goats," and other gifts. Of course, people drank a lot of milk (cf. Hebrews 5:12-13) without severely harming the animals. But since these animals were gifts from God, the death of some animals apparently had God's approval because the use of fat is specified, and fat is ordinarily taken from a dead animal (Deuteronomy 32:14).

Later in biblical history, the Israelites conquered the Midianites and as part of the spoil took their cattle as their own property (Numbers 31:9-11). This was common battle behavior and is described many times in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 2:34-35; 3:7). The spoils of the animals were also considered to be a blessing from God (Deuteronomy 20:14).

**Genesis 15:8-17** This section tells how Abram and God made a covenant with each other. A common near eastern procedure for initiating a covenant was to arrange a specific type of formal ceremony which involved the death of several animals. God specified that Abram was to use a three year old heifer, a three year old she goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. According to custom, Abram split the animal carcasses (except for the birds) and laid the pieces out in two rows.

Ordinarily, each participant in the agreement walked between the rows of carcasses, symbolically saying, "May I become as one of these if I violate this contract."

Since God participated in this practice, it obviously had divine sanction (at least in this case), which means that it was not a flagrant disavowal of human responsibilities toward animals. Abram was within his rights when he killed animals on such an intensely solemn occasion to show the gravity of trustworthy relations.

There was a reason why they did not simply use split melons, logs, or rocks in this process. When animals were killed, a spirit was extinguished; and this would graphically picture a human's death. It was ghastly, it was shocking, and it served as a vivid image of the importance of being faithful to the covenant. So, it was not that animals were viewed as "nothing" and were therefore killed and laid out without consideration. The very point of such an event is that animals are "something," although something which could be used in such an act. Lives were taken, not for food or shelter, although that may have been a byproduct of the act, but to foster solemnity.

**Genesis 16:12** The angel of the Lord prophesied that Ishmael would be an ass of a man. Using animals as symbols for particular character traits is an extremely common practice in the Bible. In what way would Ishmael be like a wild ass? The text basically says that he will be stubborn and hard to get along with. That is a normal way of using the term ass in modern times as well. In chapter forty-nine Jacob described several of his sons by using animal metaphors. There are dozens and dozens of instances of the metaphorical use of animals in the Bible.[18]

---

[18]For more on the use of animal metaphors, see Appendix E.

**Genesis 18:7-8** Hospitality was an important part of life in the ancient near east; and when three men came to Abram's tent, he immediately went to the herd, took a tender and good calf, and had a servant prepare it for them. Then they ate curds, milk, and the calf. There is no mention of concern for animal families, animal feelings, etc., but that does not really mean there was none. Clearly, the consideration here is to take good care of the guests.

**Genesis 18:22-32** When Abram was pleading for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he said nothing about the safety of the animals there. He pled only for the people. When Lot and his family were subsequently ushered out of Sodom, they took no animals (19:15). The animals were left in the cities to be destroyed along with the sinful humans.

**Genesis 22:3** Abraham saddled a donkey to ride and apparently let it carry some of his belongings as well. In the Bible, donkeys, oxen, camels, and other animals were considered beasts of burden, subservient to human needs. The Bible contains many examples of riding animals (cf. 2 Kings 9:17,19; Judges 10:2;19:10; 2 Samuel 13:29;17:23; 1 Kings 1:33, 38; Esther 7:9; Nehemiah 2:12), of animals carrying loads (cf. 42:26; 1 Samuel 25:18; 16:20; 1 Kings 10:2), and of animals pulling wagons (cf. 45:21; 1 Samuel 6:7 ff.; 2 Samuel 6:3-6; Nehemiah 13:15; Psalm 144:13-14) or plowing (cf. 1 Kings 19:19-21; Job 1:14; Isaiah 30:24).

Jesus even rode an ass colt and specified that it had to be one on which no one had sat (Matthew 21:1-7; Mark 11:2). Would that not be an extra burden, especially since it was just a colt? The apostle Paul also rode beasts on occasion (Acts 23:24).

Notice that Abraham did not walk alongside the donkey as if it were an equal. Neither did he leave it at home. Rather, the donkey was viewed as a servant to him.

This was normal practice and acceptable to allow the animal to bear the rider's weight and exert its energy rather than Abraham's doing his own walking.

**Genesis 24:18-46** This is one of several biblical occasions in which humans fed, watered, and cared for animals (e.g., 42:27; 43:24). Was this done out of concern for the animals or for purely selfish human concerns? Why could it not be both?[19]

**Genesis 24:31-32** Laban prepared a place to stay for the servant and for the camels that were with him. He also ungirded the camels and provided straw and provender for them. But why not just leave the girds on the animals? It might be that he was thinking of the animals or that he was thinking only of himself. If Laban left the girds on the animals, they might not be as fit for work.

For example, if a horseman leaves a saddle on the animal at night, when the horse lies down it could break the saddle. Saddles cost money. But the saddle could also rub sores on the horse. Horses also cost money. However, one horseman might love the animal and not want it to suffer with sores or even to burden it with the added weight of a saddle all night. But another horseman might remove the saddle simply because it is hard to ride a horse and make it do what he wants if the horse has sores. There is no way to decide which of these cases accurately depicts Laban's situation because his actions are evident, but his motives are not.

Which of these two motives compelled Jacob as he was traveling to say that the flocks and herds that had young ones were a care to him and if overdriven for a day they would all die, so he needed to travel slowly (Genesis 33:13)? Was he thinking, "Drive them too long and I will not be a rich man much longer" or "The poor things! We must move more slowly!" Again, the motives are not clear.

---

[19]For more on taking care of animals, see Appendix F.

Jacob made booths for the cattle (33:17). Why make shelters for animals rather than just leaving them outside? Was it for their comfort or for protecting Jacob's investment? Shelter from storms, cold weather, and predators would definitely bring a comfort to the animals, but it would also protect them so that they would be useful to their owner. Examples abound (as in Numbers 20:19) but leave ambiguous the answers some seek.

**Genesis 27:9-17** The Bible contains a number of instances where people manipulate animals for ulterior motives, but this practice is not usually condoned by anyone except the one doing it. In this case, Jacob and his mother Rebekah killed sheep to use for food and for skins to deceive the father, Isaac. Animal lives were taken for wrong purposes in this case, and yet there is absolutely no dissonance visible in the two people involved. The people wanted to deceive Isaac, and the animals were unwitting pawns in the ploy. No sentiments were expressed such as, "Oh, I wish we didn't have to kill these sweet little creatures in order to deceive Isaac! If only there were another way." The tenor of the text is that the deceit is wrong, but nothing is said about their use of the animals.

Elsewhere in the Bible, Joseph's brothers sell him as a slave. But to deceive their father, they explain his absence by claiming that a wild beast devoured him (Genesis 37:20). They dipped his robe in animal blood to convince their father of Joseph's death (37:31-33). The blood and the blame they cast on a wild beast is another example of using animals for unscrupulous purposes.

People even used animals as an excuse for their behavior at times. Proverbs 22:13 records the sluggard's excuse for not going out to work because, he says, "there is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets" (cf. Proverbs 26:13).

**Genesis 30:29-30** Jacob worked for Laban, took care of his cattle, and apparently did a good job because Laban benefited from his labor. The ewes and she goats had not miscarried, so Jacob seems to have been knowledgeable about animal ways and needs (31:38). He eventually practiced selective breeding to produce a larger number of speckled and spotted sheep which made Jacob a wealthy man (Genesis 30:31-43).

**Genesis 31:19** Shearing sheep is an ancient practice (cf. 39:12-13) and wool had many uses (cf. Judges 6:37). This use of animals was not generally a life threatening custom, but emphasizes one of the common uses of animals throughout history.

**Genesis 31:39** Some of the sheep were torn by wild beasts, but Jacob paid his employer for the losses. This helps spell out the role of a shepherd in more detail than was previously given in the biblical text, viz., protecting the flock from wild animals.

**Genesis 37:12ff.** Joseph's brothers were pasturing their father's flock. Their father sent Joseph to find them. While doing so he got into some trouble that changed the course of his family's history. Sometimes events involving animals invoke major shifts in biblical history, sometimes simply by an animal's wandering lost and putting people into situations they would not have been in otherwise (cf. 1 Samuel 9:3 ff.).

Another texts says that Samson killed a lion. Passing by the carcass later, he found a honeycomb in there which he used to formulate a riddle for his wedding guests. Out of their answer grew a major political fiasco, a circumstance in which animals were key elements in setting up major events (Judges 14:8). Of course, the animals did not purposely intend to be involved in these events, but try to imagine biblical history without the twists and turns provided by bringing animals into the picture.

**Genesis 40:16-17** While in an Egyptian prison, a baker related his dream to fellow inmate Joseph. In his dream, birds ate baked goods from a basket on the baker's head. Joseph explained that this dream meant that the birds would eat the baker's flesh in three days. Animals play an important role in establishing Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. This talent will eventually lead to his introduction to Pharaoh, and still later to a pivotal position in the Egyptian government.

In the prophetic literature, being devoured by scavengers was a common image of a people's complete devastation. For example, a prophet said that the people beyond the rivers of Ethiopia would one day be destroyed by another nation. Their destruction would be so complete that their bodies would be left to the ravenous birds and beasts of the earth (Isaiah 18:6). At one point God says that he would destroy the unfaithful and their bodies would be food for animals and no one would be there to scare the scavengers away from the bodies (Deuteronomy 28:26). Goliath told David, "I'll give your flesh to the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field" (1 Samuel 17:44). David said the same of Goliath (v. 46). People thought of some such birds as "filthy and detested" (Revelation 18:2).

Foretelling the destruction of Gog, God told Ezekiel to call together the scavenger birds and beasts and promised that they would eat fat until they were full and would drink blood until they were drunk (Ezekiel 39:17-20). John graphically wrote that after the wicked armies of Satan were defeated, "the birds gorged themselves on the flesh" (Revelation 19:21).

Ordinarily, a sign of respect was to cover the bodies to keep the scavengers from desecrating human remains, but no mention was made of preserving animal remains in this way (2 Samuel 21:10). Thus, in a sense, leaving a human body to be devoured would be degrading to enemies, treating them as one would animals (cf. 1

Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:19; Revelation 19:17-18). A similar degrading image is that of dogs licking up an enemy's blood (1 Kings 21:19; Psalm 68:23).

Scavengers have an important job in the ecological balance of nature in several ways, even in controlling the spread of diseases by devouring dead bodies which would otherwise decay and foster the growth of bacterial agents, some of which have negative consequences on animal and vegetable life. This adds another piece to the puzzle of animal *telos*.

**Genesis 49:6** In Jacob's blessing/prophecy about his children, he said that in their anger, Simeon and Levi killed men and in their wantonness they hamstrung oxen. This is an apparent reference to the fiasco over the rape of their sister in which they had taken their revenge not only on people not directly involved in the rape, but even on their animals (Genesis 34). It shows that cutting animals' hamstrings to debilitate them dates back several millennia (cf. Joshua 11:6, 9). This was not done for the animal's good, generally, but to limit their capacities to behave in certain ways. In this case it was done simply as a lesson of punishment to the families of the young man who raped the sister. The text does not say that this situation had Divine approval; it was a decision made by a couple of vengeful individuals.

**Genesis 49:17** Continuing his blessing/prophecy about his offspring, Jacob also said that Dan would be like a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backwards. Snakes biting horses' heels was not just a problem in the American "wild west." It is a fascinating comment on one of the more subtle ways that wild animals can interact with one another. Because human beings rely on animals so much, some of those interactions affect them as well.

**Genesis 49:24** This may be the first reference to God as a shepherd of his people. This metaphor becomes one of the most endearing and meaningful symbols of God's relation to his people.

Jesus referred to himself as "the Good Shepherd" (John 10). He told a story about a man with one hundred sheep. One wandered away and became lost. The shepherd left the ninety-nine in order to find the one that was lost. When he found it, there was great rejoicing. Was there rejoicing simply because a product was returned to his pot of wealth? Or, was it at least partly because a sheep had been saved from discomfort and/or death (Matthew 18:12-13)? Luke chapter sixteen and others use this story to teach something about God's attitude toward people. But in doing so it makes a point about how a shepherd should feel about the animals in his care.

The Bible says in a number of places that God did not want Israel to be like sheep without a shepherd. Without a shepherd, sheep can wander aimlessly, go hungry, and fall prey to predators, among other things (Numbers 27:17). The prophets used this image numerous times in an effort vividly to illustrate for Israel how God had cared for them and given them what they needed; yet they rebelled against him.

This special image of shepherding is applied to God a multitude of times throughout the Bible (28:9; 95:7; 100:3), but many think of Psalm 23 as the classic example of God as the shepherd and his people "the sheep of thy pasture" (79:13). It says a lot about how shepherds should treat sheep and about how shepherding in general was conceptualized. It was a caring, providing, comforting position, appropriate even to liken to God.

Jesus regularly employed parables to get his point across. The relationship of shepherds and their sheep was one he used a lot. The book of John chapter ten records an extended use of this analogy. Jesus said that the good shepherd lays down his life

for his sheep. If the shepherd is willing to die for the sheep, then it seems that the value of the sheep, even the *telos* of the sheep, is not simply instrumental. If the value of the sheep is solely measured insofar as they benefit the owner, then if the owner dies, they have no value to him. Yet, in this case the owner is willing to die for the sheep as though they are valuable beyond their benefit to him.

Jesus drew several interesting parallels between his work and the work of the shepherd. The shepherd knows his sheep well, knows them by name, they know his voice, he protects them, they follow him and no one else, he provides shelter for them, loves them, and "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." In Jesus' view, the shepherd does not look upon his sheep as automatons that are nothing but food machines. He cares deeply for them, but recognizes that they have a role in life (a *telos*) and must fulfill that role. A particularly endearing statement from Jesus along these lines was "fear not, little flock" (Luke 12:32).

**Genesis 50:9** This is the first biblical reference to chariots and horsemen. As odd as it may seem today, even in those days, some people were unsafe drivers. As Jehu was driving his chariot toward town, a lookout saw him coming and recognized him saying, "it must be Jehu for he driveth furiously" (2 Kings 9:20). Driving furiously puts tremendous strain on the horses who must pull the chariot.

Chariots were particularly significant in warfare. There was a time when chariots were to warfare what smart missiles are today, the cutting edge of military technology. If one army in a battle had them and the opposing army did not, the fight was one-sided.

Animals were used in other ways in war, as when troops used camels and asses in battle (Isaiah 21:7). This illustrates another way that animals represented power to human beings - military power.

## SUMMARY OF PATRIARCHAL PERIOD DATA

As a brief summary of the texts from the time prior to the law of Moses, note that animals were not considered equals with humans; but they were nevertheless not nothing. Human beings were made in God's image and given a Divine edict to rule over and subdue the natural world. But animals formed a vitally important aspect of the human pilgrimage on earth. From the time that Adam and Eve were living in the garden of Eden until the great flood subsided, God had evidently forbade eating meat. But after the flood God ordained it. Adam named the animals. Animals were killed in order to make possible certain covenant-making ceremonies. They served as teachers of important social and spiritual lessons. Animals provided valuable food, clothing, protection, sacrifices, dairy products, and a variety of other services. They also carried burdens, both people and goods. They were kept in herds, sheltered, fed, relieved from encumbrances for the night's rest, and protected from predators. Sometimes they suffered along with human beings because of human sin. They gave people monetary power, agricultural power, and military power. They provided a rich and diverse set of insightful linguistic metaphors. At times animals were used for selfish reasons which fall outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior toward animals (such as when Joseph's brothers killed a lamb just to use its blood to deceive their father into thinking that it was Joseph's blood Genesis 37:31-33) but there is no Divine sanction for these occasions and it does not seem to have been the general practice.

Animals were sometimes fed, groomed, and sheltered, but the texts is not always clear about whether they were treated this way because of their own intrinsic significance or simply because they were instrumentally valuable to their owners as useful property.

Animals were to be killed if they killed a man or woman, but there is no textual evidence that animals were viewed as moral agents or capable of actual wrongdoing. Animals were also very important agents in the redeeming process. People had to sacrifice or give God a gift to find cleansing, but they could not do so alone. Animals made it possible to be found acceptable before God. Animals have thus far had some very important roles to play in the biblical text, but when they did enter in, usually it was only because they helped to tell the human story.

## II. The Mosaic Period

Because of some relatively innovative attitudes expressed in the Mosaic law system, Charles Niven says that perhaps, "Moses was the founder of the Humane Movement."[20] But as documented in chapter one, some have expressed concern that the Bible contains so few direct statements regarding both the issue of animal *telos* and the proper treatment of animals.

This section will cover relevant sections of the law of Moses, as well as some of the relevant events that occurred during the approximately 1,500 years when the Israelites were governed by it. That includes the rest of the Old Testament and some of the New, from Exodus through the Gospel According to John. After the death of Jesus, however, the law of Moses fades into the background and Christianity becomes the primary emphasis.

### EXODUS

**Exodus 4:3-5** God caused Moses' staff first to become a snake and then a staff again. This was intended to provide Moses with reason to believe the voice he heard coming from the burning bush and thereby to compel him to obey. A snake initiated a

---

[20]Charles Niven, History of the Humane Movement (New York: Transatlantic Arts, 1967):9-10.

series of events that rocked Egypt, parted the Red Sea, conquered nations, etc.

But this snake was brought into existence solely to convince a man, then was removed from existence a moment later. What type of ethical status would this living creature have? Does this constitute abuse in some way? It certainly seems to be manipulative, merely using a living creature for a moment then annihilating it.

A similar situation arose when Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh. Both their staffs and Pharaoh's magicians' staffs were transformed into serpents. But Moses' and Aaron's serpents ate the others (7:9-12). This was a powerful display of God's power over the local deities and magicians. But animals were in the spotlight. Is it cruel to create an animal then, once it has performed as you dictate, to do away with it?

There are several cases like these in the biblical text. God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17). God prepared a worm to eat a gourd, which taught Jonah a valuable lesson about racial prejudice and the importance of all human and animal life (Jonah 4:7). In these texts, "prepared" may not mean that they were created especially for this task. It may only mean that God used a creature that was already in the area. Even so, God used the animals for a job before setting them free to go their way.

Maybe it is simply within the *telos* of animals to serve humanity in this fashion. Since God is the giver of life and creator of the universe, surely he is right in creating animals to accomplish important, specific tasks which have national and international consequences. Even if he immediately slipped them out of existence after their work was done, how much animal suffering was involved? It does not appear that the animals suffered in these cases, unless perhaps the serpents suffered while being devoured by the other serpents.

**Exodus 7:18 ff** During several of the ten plagues in Egypt, animals suffered along with people, sometimes even bearing the brunt of the plague. When the Nile was turned to blood, the fish in it died (7:21). A plague of frogs covered the land of Egypt, and when the plague was withdrawn they died in such numbers that they were gathered into heaps and stank (8:2-14). Huge numbers of lice (8:16-17) and flies (8:21-24) were used to make a point to the Egyptians. When lice and flies plagues ended, the insects were removed from Egypt, but it is not clear whether they died (8:31). This may not have been an imposition on the insects, however. Since the text does not say whether God created them or whether he brought them to Egypt from elsewhere. It might have been merely a change of location for the insects rather than a matter of life and death.

The plague of murrain targeted Egyptian livestock, including asses, camels, flocks, and herds but did not harm Israel's animals (9:3-7). The plague of boils affected both people and beasts (9:9-11), and so did the plague of hail and fire (19:18-25). The subsequent plague of locusts was so thick that a person could not see the ground. The millions of locusts were also taken away with a strong wind, but whether any of them died as a result is not specified. Actually, they had some good meals while stripping all of the plants (10:4-19).

A notable point of the plagues relevant to animal *telos* is that animals suffered some of the consequences of human behavior (see also the discussion at Genesis 6:7). The animals did not suffer the plagues because of something they did. Pharaoh in particular was the one who misbehaved. But not only did his subjects suffer the consequences, so did the animals of the area.

Another relevant point about the plagues is that God himself brought a lot of pain, misery, and death on many creatures to convince Pharaoh. Plainly, these texts

imply that nothing is inherently wrong with that, or else a perfect God would not have done it.

**Exodus 12:29** The last of the ten plagues was the death of the first-born of each family, including the animal families. The only way to escape it was to use the blood of a lamb (Exodus 12:3 ff.). It is not clear whether the animals could also escape death by being in a home where this was practiced, but it is may be significant that the text does not even address this question. It is at least reasonable to conclude that the animals which belonged to a family observing this Passover procedure would be saved. However, a one year old lamb had to die in each of those households to provide the blood for the door post and the meal which they were required to eat. Since an animal had to die in order to save a human life, which was more valuable, the human being or the animal?

**Exodus 13:13** God told the Jews to redeem certain animals in order to teach their children that God brought them out of Egypt. This involved one animal dying for another, as in the case where an ass could be redeemed with a lamb (cf. Numbers 18:16-17). Most texts say that animals died for human beings, but here is a rare case where an animal dies for an animal.

**Exodus 19:12-13** While the Israelites were encamped around Mount Sinai, God said that no one except those he specified were to touch the mount. If even if a beast touched the mountain, it was to be put to death by being stoned or "shot through." Of course, if animals are moral agents then this practice seems more equitable. But if animals are not moral agents, why kill the animal for disobeying a rule of which it was not aware? Possibly, it was necessary to illustrate that when God says something, it is sufficiently important to be obeyed no matter what. Maybe this directive implies that God is so infinitely worthy of respect and awe that if so much as

a goat touches the mountain, people might see the command as having been smudged or diminished in some way, as though there might be an exception to God's rule. Thus, maybe in order to sustain an appropriate esteem for God, it was better to kill a goat if it touched the mountain.

**Exodus 20:10** The Jews were to rest on the Sabbath day. Surprisingly, even an animal was not allowed to work on the Sabbath (Exodus 23:12; Deuteronomy 5:14). Nor were they to work in the Sabbath year (Leviticus 25:6-7). This provision may have been for the animals' benefit, allowing much needed rest. Then again, maybe it only provides for human beings, as discussed in the section on Exodus 19:12-13. The bottom line is that in this text, God specified that animals were to get a rest from their labor.

**Exodus 21:28-32** In this section of the text there are several biblical injunctions regarding the proper treatment of animals, as well as assorted legal and practical concerns for animal owners to consider. For example, if an ox gored a person or an animal, the offending animal could be stoned to death for its role in the tragedy, but the owner is nonetheless "liable for his animal's behavior"[21] (Exodus 21:28-32, 35-36). He had to remunerate the victim depending on the injury incurred. People had to take care of their animals so as to preclude damage being done to others when their animals acted like animals.[22]

Further precepts spell out how to handle situations where someone's ox hurts someone else's ox (Exodus 21:35-36), someone steals an ox (Exodus 22:1-4; Leviticus

---

[21]Richard Knowles Morris 28.

[22]A unique and interesting study related to this is J. J. Finklestein's The Ox That Gored, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 71 part 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981). Finklestein was professor of Assyriology and Babylonian literature at Yale. In this work he studied biblical goring laws, and compared them with other eastern laws, then investigated their impact on western laws.

24:18; 24:21), someone's beast eats someone else's field (Exodus 22:5), someone sells an animal that then dies (Exodus 22:10-13), someone sees someone else's animal astray (Exodus 23:4), and if a man owned a pit and someone's animal fell into it and died (Exodus 21:33-34). If someone saw someone else's ox or sheep fallen down by the way, they could not hide and act like they did not see it. They are required to help the animal and lift it out (Deuteronomy 22:4). As in so many of these cases, the question remains whether these rules which seem beneficial to the animals are motivated by concern for animal or human. The texts which might have added so much to the discussion about animal *telos* simply do not address this issue directly.

**Exodus 22:19** The Mosaic law states very clearly that having sex with an animal brings a death sentence for both the person and the animal (Leviticus 18:23; 20:15-16). This law recognizes an enormous sexual gulf between people and animals. Animals may be used for many purposes which fulfill human needs, but they must not be manipulated to serve the sexual passions of humanity. The motivation question lingers here as well. Does this law protect animals from abuse, does it promote the purity of limiting one's sexual behavior to marital sex, does it say something about the defilement of a human being who would do such a thing, or does it intend a related moral lesson? Further, since the animal also must be penalized, does this imply that it carries any guilt for the act? The text does not explicitly say.[23]

**Exodus 23:5** If someone sees a donkey overburdened, he or she must relieve its hardship. Concern seems to be shown here for the beast itself, not solely for the good it would bring the owner. But how can that be firmly established?

---

[23]For more information on the subject of animals being morally culpable for wrongdoing, see comments on Genesis 9:5-6 and Appendix D.

**Exodus 23:11** What the poor do not eat, the beasts may eat. Provision is made for animals, but even poor people come first.

**Exodus 23:19** "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk" (34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21). Many think this is commanded for the purpose of discouraging cruelty in general and perhaps discouraging cruelty toward animals in particular.

But Adam Clarke refers to a Canaanite ritual that is very similar to this.[24] If his reference is accurate, the commandment may only be an attempt to prevent the Israelites from copying the practices of the pagan religions around them.

**Exodus 23:29** God said that when the Israelites arrived at the promised land, he would drive out the current inhabitants because of their exceeding sinfulness. "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee" (Deuteronomy 7:22). This may have been addressing nothing but animal population management. Decimating the human population quickly would leave animals roaming wild and multiplying unhindered. They could easily destroy crops and crop potential.

George Cansdale says that after the Crusades, livestock "were allowed to ranged uncontrolled, destroying plants of all kinds and exposing the steep hillsides to erosion by the fierce winter storms."[25] This deterioration of soil led to the farmers' yield lessening, forcing them to cultivate more land, which led to the destruction of more trees, etc. The same thing might have happened to the land of Canaan unless handled properly.

---

[24]Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible With a Commentary and Critical Notes, repr. ed., vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, n.d.):477.

[25]Cansdale 36.

These were domesticated animals, and rather than being allowed to run wild and later domesticated again or being killed off by predators, they were to be cared for by human beings continually until the land was possessed by the Israelites. The stated reason for this was not the good of animals, but was for human benefit.

**Exodus 25:4-5** Some of the major components of the tabernacle were made from goat's hair and ram and seal skins. When the Israelites broke camp to move each time, the pieces of the tabernacle were covered with sealskin (Numbers 4:1-16). The text says that this use of animals had divine approval. That might not be enough to justify using animals for decorating a person's home, however. This was a one of a kind holy place.

**Exodus 32:4, 8** While Moses was on mount Sinai receiving the law, the people at the foot of the mountain made a golden calf to worship. They may have gotten this idea from the Egyptians, whose religions incorporated several animal deities.

Several people in the Bible worshipped animal-type gods (Romans 1:22-23). The Philistines made images of golden mice as a peace offering to the God of Israel (1 Samuel 6:4-5). Their gods may even have been mouselike in some way.

Even though one of the ten commandments said that the Jews must not make any graven images or worship other gods, and were specifically commanded not to make a graven image in the likeness of any bird or creeping beast or fish (Deuteronomy 4:17-18), some Israelites like king Manasseh made many altars to other gods, creatures, the host of heaven, and even offered their children as sacrifices (2 Kings 18:4; 21:3-6; 2 Chronicles 13:8). It has always been a common practice for some religions to deify certain animals.

**LEVITICUS**

**Leviticus 1:15** When offering a bird as a sacrifice, the blood had to be drained and sometimes had to be caught in jars. Blood is extraordinarily important in the Bible. The Mosaic law dictates intricate details about what to do with blood for certain types of offerings. For various offerings blood must be sprinkled on the altar, poured out at the base of the altar, on the horns of the altar, etc. On some occasions, a particular bird's blood could also be used ceremonially to cleanse things like a house exposed to leprosy (Leviticus 14:48-53).

Of course, if an animal is killed to be eaten, its blood must be drained also, because those who eat blood must be cut off from their people (7:27; cf. 1 Samuel 14:32). It is not evident in connection with these texts, but eating blood may have been related to enchantments and augury, which were condemned in the Mosaic law (19:26).

In some sense, life is in the blood (17:10-14), so generally speaking, when the law talks about blood, something has to die in order to provide it. However, animals were not simply bled. The laws usually include instructions for how to deal with body parts, including who is qualified to eat the flesh of a sacrificed animal.

Animals were also used for ceremonial cleansing, by sprinkling their blood on something, or by having their ashes sprinkled over something (Numbers 19:1-22). Both ashes and blood necessitate animal death as an element for cleansing other things.

**Leviticus 2** This chapter makes it clear that certain types of offerings to God were not limited to animal sacrifices, but could also be composed of meal, flour, and oil. Does this rank animal life with vegetative life?

**Leviticus 5:2** The people were not allowed to touch the carcass of an unclean beast. The subject of clean and unclean animals was broached in the story of Noah

and the flood, but this distinction takes on a whole new level of interest in the Mosaic law (11:1-47; Deuteronomy 14:3-21). It seems that the categories are functional only as they relate to human behavior toward them, however, and do not appear to imply that anything is ontologically inferior with unclean animals *per se*. But as it relates to touching or eating those animals, they are unclean.

**Leviticus 19:18** Although it does not directly address the treatment of animals, the directive to love one's neighbor as oneself is a precedent for placing self into the consideration of others, putting self in their place to determine one's actions toward them. Thus, a person is to think of another as sort of other self.

An individual knows how suffering feels. He or she feels it like each individual does. Other people are other selves. They feel, hurt, love, emote, etc., like self does. Thus, because self does not like to suffer, self must not make others suffer. Therefore, knowing that a person is causing someone to suffer without due cause is being hard hearted. Jesus called this the second greatest law in the whole Mosaic system, i.e., to love neighbor as self (Matthew 22:35). John said that if a man sees his brother in need and "shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Since animals and human beings share the capacity to suffer, this could have some implications for the treatment of animals. What about the Golden Rule? One should treat others the way they want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Some have applied this to animals as well as fellow human beings, but in its context it referred to people. It is certainly true, however, that an animal is another self in the sense that it has feelings, nerve endings, etc. The application to animals was not directly drawn in the text, but unless the sole *telos* of animals is to suffer, perhaps such an application would not be unreasonable.

**Leviticus 19:19** The Jews were commanded not to let their cattle gender with diverse kind. Why was it so important to maintain purity of kind? The text does not address this question, but maybe the *telos* of animals relates to this in that their purpose comes with limitations and thus establishes boundaries even in regard to breeding.

**Leviticus 22:27-28** The law condemned killing a cow or ewe and its young on the same day. Why this was the case is never spelled out in the text. It may have been purely a matter of instructing the people against callousness toward animals. People were allowed and encouraged to kill and eat animals, but that did not mean that their deaths could be accompanied by heartlessness and cruelty. They still deserve some dignity even in fulfilling their *telos*.

**Leviticus 26:22** God told the Israelites, "I will send the beast of the field among you which shall rob you of your children and destroy your cattle and make you few in number." In the Old Testament, animals were often employed as God's instruments of judgment upon various people. Animals used in this way included bears, lions, serpents, horses, caterpillars, locusts, and others (cf. Deuteronomy 32:24; Numbers 21:6-9; Joshua 24:12; 1 Kings 8:37; 1 Kings 13:24; 2 Kings 2:24; 2 Kings 9:33). But animals were also instruments used by God to help people, as when he commanded ravens to feed Elijah by bringing him bread and meat (1 Kings 17:4). So, God himself is pictured as using animals many times in his service.

**NUMBERS**

**Numbers 20:4** When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they asked, "Why have you brought us here to die, and our beasts?" Note that they mentioned their animals, not just human beings, as though the animals counted for something in themselves.

**Numbers 22:1-35** This is a fascinating occurrence. A prophet named Balaam is "hired" to speak a curse against the Israelite nation. He saddles his donkey and follows his employers toward their destination where the curse will be spoken. Along the way, God sent an angel to stand in the way and block their progress. Balaam was riding a donkey which saw the angel and left the road to walk across a field, whereupon Balaam hit the beast in an effort to turn it back toward the path. But, once it returned to the pathway, the donkey continued to balk and Balaam continued to strike the animal. Then,

> . . . the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" (verse 28) "Am I not your donkey, one which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" (verse 30).

The angel also asked Balaam why he struck the donkey three times. The angel told him that the donkey was stopping for a good reason. Hitting a beast to get it to do what someone wanted it to do was normal. How often did people beat their animals only to find that they had a good reason for not quickly obeying? If animals could only talk, how different things would be.

## DEUTERONOMY

**Deuteronomy 1:44** The Amorites chased the Israelites like a swarm of bees. This is one of a multitude of incidental references to animal behavior. The psalmist painted a graphic picture when he said that his enemies surrounded him like bees (Psalm 118:12). The prophet Amos referred to a little known fact about lions in his statement, "Will a lion roar when he hath no prey?" (Amos 3:4). The prophet Nahum also must have known something about lions because he said that the lion's den was filled with prey which he strangled for his lionesses and whelp (Nahum 2:11-12).

After Job and his friends talked for a long time, each having spoken his views about why Job's suffering had occurred, God spoke to the group (Job 38:39-39:30). He asked Job a series of questions which Job could not answer. Many of the questions were about animals, and give insights into certain details of animal life. For example, "Do you know when the wild goats give birth?" and "Did you cause the eagle to build her nest on high?" The questions serve as a reminder of how little human beings really know about the animal world.

Jesus said that before the cock crowed twice, Peter would deny him three times (Matthew 26:34, 74-75; Mark 14:30). Cocks were well known for crowing at certain times of day, especially midnight and morning. Jesus also said not to store up wealth on the earth where moth and rust consume (Matthew 6:19). Store up treasure in the kingdom of heaven. Moths have always been a problem for certain types of cloth. It is amazing how many details about animal behavior could be learned by reading the Bible. People in the Bible were familiar with many intricacies of the animal world.

**Deuteronomy 7:13-14** God said that if the Israelites kept their covenant with him, he would bless them with many things, including cattle. God knew how the cattle were going to be used (killed, skinned, eaten, worked, etc.) and gave them to the people anyway.

**Deuteronomy 22:6-7** If someone found a bird's nest with the mother bird in it and also containing either eggs or young birds, they were not to take the mother and the little ones together. They could take the little ones, but had to let the mother go, "that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." A blessing accompanied the command to treat animals this way. This text appears to encourage human beings to be aware of and discourage a course, callous attitude toward animals.

**Deuteronomy 22:10** Another consideration given to animals says that because of the unequal strength of the ox and the donkey, these two animals should not be yoked together at the plough. The naturally greater power of the ox pulling with great strength and the donkey only able to pull much less but also being pulled *by* the ox would place the donkey in a difficult working environment. A divine edict said that this is not good and forbade it. On the surface this seems to be for the good of the animal itself aside from consideration of its owner's benefit, but if the donkey is worn out, it cannot do much work, and that affects the owner.

**Deuteronomy 25:4** When the Israelites used an ox to tread out the corn, they were forbidden to muzzle it. Without a muzzle, the ox could eat as it worked. This text was quoted by the apostle Paul in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 9:9-10) where he added this principle: "Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" (1 Corinthians 9:7).

The two Pauline references occur in a context where Paul was justifying pay for a preacher. After quoting Deuteronomy 25:4, he said, "Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith he it assuredly for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written . . . ." Paul's application of this text is rather enigmatic because on the surface he appears to be saying that the principle was not given for the sake of animals because God does not care for animals. Throughout Old Testament history, however, it seemed to say that it is right and just for the ox to be allowed to eat the fruit of its labor, as though the ox has earned the right to it and deserves it by virtue of this "fairness" principle.

Niven thinks, however, that the apostle Paul "completely failed to understand the motives which prompted the insertion of this clause in the early Israelite code."[26]

---

[26]Niven 25.

Turner also believes that when Paul says, "Doth God care for oxen?" he does so "contemptuously, overlooking the evidence."[27]

But there is another principle here. The apostle is quick to point out the reason why this holds true. The one who plows should be the first to partake of the fruit of his labors (2 Timothy 2:6). According to the Mosaic law, this goes for animals as well as humans (1 Tim 5:17-18). It may simply be that Paul is employing ellipsis, leaving out a word which is to be supplied and understood by the reader. The point being that Paul may have been saying, "Do you think that this was just written for oxen? No! It has implications for us as well."

The prophet Zechariah motivated the people to finish building the second temple by arguing that before they laid the foundation for the temple, there were wages for neither man nor beast because everyone was afraid of enemies and of each other (Zechariah 8:10). What is notable here about animal *telos* in the Bible is that animals earned wages for their labor. This may have been a type of fodder or something else that animals would enjoy, or it may have been money for their owners. Either way, it adds another element to the value of animals as seen by the Jews. They were wage earners (Zechariah 8:10).

This is the end of the laying down of the Mosaic law. However, the law was in effect throughout the rest of the Old Testament, and people were held accountable for obeying it and were sometimes perfunctorily punished for disobeying it. From this point forward, little of the law proper will be presented in the text; but it is there in the background, the everpresent standard of behavior of which God continued to remind

---

[27]E. S. Turner, All Heaven in a Rage (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964):24.

the Jews and in reference to which he condemned their sins. The twelve books of history, five books of poetry, and seventeen books of prophecy follow.

**JOSHUA**

**Joshua 6:4** The Israelite army surrounded their enemies. Their method of attack was unusual in this case because when they had surrounded them, they blew rams' horns. This is another use of animal products.

**JUDGES**

**Judges 14:8** Samson killed a lion and later found honey (an insect product which some count as an animal product) in its carcass. He gave the honey to his parents and they ate it (cf. 1 Samuel 14:24-30). Animals produce many edible goods besides meat which nourish and add enjoyment to lives of human beings (as eggs, milk, honey, etc.).

**Judges 15:4** Samson caught three hundred foxes, tied their tails together, tied firebrands to them, and set them loose in his enemies' grain fields. There is neither approval nor disapproval in the text; it simply gives an account of the events. This does seem to be an unnecessarily harsh way of dealing with animals since it not only brings unnecessary suffering to animals which they could not easily escape, but it also does not fall within the boundaries of what others texts imply is the commonly understood *telos* of animals. Rather, it appears to be the actions of a rash and angry individual. Of course, this seems typical of Samson, a rough individual whom God used to accomplish some good things while not condoning all of his behavior.

**Judges 15:15** Samson killed one thousand men with the fresh jawbone of a donkey. Another contribution that animals have made to the human endeavor is weaponry. Animal bones have also been used as parts for weapons such as arrows, spears, breastplates, and whips.

## 2 SAMUEL

**2 Samuel 12:1-6** The prophet Nathan told King David the touching story of a poor man's pet lamb. He nourished it and raised it with his children as a member of the family. It ate his food, drank from his cup, and lay in his bosom. There is a wonderful intimacy pictured in the story, a story so powerful that upon hearing how a heartless rich man took the lamb and killed it for a guest to consume, David flew into a rage. He demanded that the rich man be severely punished, only to discover that indeed David himself was the allegorical rich man (having killed a faithful soldier and taken his wife). David's livid response says something about the tender human/animal association which he related to in the allegory. David grew up as a shepherd boy and likely understood this story in a special sense.

Pets are not unknown in the Bible (cf. Matthew 15:26-27). King Solomon's trading ships went to sea and returned with apes, peacocks, and other exotic things (2 Chronicles 9:21). Although the text does not specify what happened to the animals, people always love to see unusual creatures from other lands, and some would likely become pets. Wealthy folks could afford to keep expensive creatures in cages or simply as decorations wandering their property.

## 1 KINGS

**1 Kings 4:32-33** Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs. In them he spoke of trees, beasts, birds, creeping things, and fishes just doing what they naturally do. This offers a glimpse into the fascination and romance that were attached to animals and the natural realm. Animals have always had a certain mystery and imagery about them that lends itself to poetic expression. Some of the most beautiful poetry ever written has been about animals and natural settings.

Animals thus enhance human poetry and have a part in the richness which this art adds to the human condition.

**1 Kings 7:29** Animals also had a part in another Israelite art form. The temple which Solomon built for God in Jerusalem was a truly awesome structure. Animals were an important component of the decorations. On the panels between the ledges were images of lions, oxen, and cherubim.

Decorating with pictures of animals was a high form of art which could adorn even such august locations as temples and palaces (1 Kings 7:36, 44). These were not places for unbecoming art. The decorations in these structures had to be of a very special class.

**2 KINGS**

**2 Kings 5:17** One man described an amount of dirt as "two mules' burden of earth," i.e., the amount of earth which a pair of mules could carry. Animals even helped establish a measuring system.

**2 Kings 7:7, 10** The people left their horses and other things and fled, leaving the horses and donkeys tied. They probably would not have left their families because, as important as they believed animals were, there was a difference between humans and animals in their minds. As much as they hated to see their animals taken by enemies, human life had priority.

**EZRA**

**Ezra 2:64-67** When the Israelites were counted on this occasion, their servants and animals (horses, mules, asses, and camels) were counted as well. A similar counting occurred later which also included the servants and animals (Nehemiah 7:66-69). It is interesting that the servants and animals were mentioned separately. The fact that their population numbers needed to be included in the count rather than their

not being counted shows something of their significance, but it is not clear in the text what that significance is.

**NEHEMIAH**

**Nehemiah 2:13** The Jackal's Well is mentioned here. Animal names were occasionally used to name places. There were different gates into Jerusalem like the Sheep Gate (Nehemiah 3:1) and Fish Gate (Nehemiah 3:3). This is another indicator of how pervasive animals' influence was in the Israelite culture.

**Nehemiah 4:3** Animals were even used in humor. Tobiah the Ammonite was criticizing the walls which the Jews were building around the city of Jerusalem. He described the wall as so weak that if a fox climbed on it, even the delicate fox's weight would knock it down.

**ESTHER**

**Esther 8:10** Animals were used in a type of ancient postal service. People sent letters by posts on horseback, riding on swift steeds that were used in the king's service. This practice enabled urgent messages to be transferred quickly. Without the animals, the people (especially wealthy and powerful people) would have had many more problems with delicate information moving too slowly.

**JOB**

**Job 5:22** It was natural to be afraid of wild animals. Eliphaz said that the man whom God favors would be protected and had no need to be afraid of the beasts of the field. While fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13). Wild beasts are usually thought of as dangerous creatures. It is ironic that animals serve human beings in so many ways, and yet human beings live in fear of so many animals. If all animals were placid, the fiercer animals like lions and bears would be even more manipulated by people than they are now.

**Job 12:7-8** Job says that the beasts, birds, earth, and fish could teach his interlocutors some things about suffering. Perhaps written during the Patriarchal period, this is one of the many injunctions for men to learn very important lessons from animals.[28] Wise men have always been able to turn to nature for profound insights into life.

Jesus did this remarkably well in his teachings. A measure of wisdom and humility is required to realize that a full-grown man has a lot to learn from tiny things like ants, spiders, birds, and grasshoppers (Proverbs 6:6). In these non-human creatures the lessons are lived out so wonderfully and clearly that nothing else on earth can communicate many lessons so well as they can[29] (cf. Job 35:11; Proverbs 6:6-9; 30:24-31).

**Job 40:15-41:34** This is an unusual passage about two extremely large animals referred to as the behemoth and the leviathan, both feared by human beings[30] (cf. Psalm 104:25-26; Isaiah 27:1). God showed Job that although man has dominion over the earth and its creatures, he does not know everything about it and cannot control it.

**PSALMS**

**Psalm 8:5-8** The psalmist said that God made man a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor, a unique position compared to animals. Hearkening back to Genesis chapter one, the psalmist said that God gave humanity

---

[28]There is some ambiguity regarding the date of the book of Job. It is at least reasonable for the purpose of this paper to place it in this early period, since many scholars regard Job as the oldest book in the Bible. See Gleason L. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974) rev. ed.

[29]See John W. Klotz, "Domestic Animals and Bible Symbolism," Concordia Journal 7 (1981):144-149.

[30]There are extended discussions about what these animals are. Some think they are simply large animals (hippopotamus or whale) while others think they may have been either dinosaurs or some figure of speech representing the larger and more dangerous members of the animal kingdom. Whatever the specifics, the point of the text remains clear.

dominion over the works of God's hands and put all things under humanity's feet (he specifically mentioned animals, birds, and fish). The author of Hebrews 2:6-8 quotes these verses and draws Messianic inferences. This reaffirms the biblical view that part of the *telos* of animals is in some way to be in subjection to human beings.

**Psalm 29:9** The voice of Jehovah makes hinds to calve. The text may be talking about the sound of thunder so loud that pregnant animals are sent into labor by its forcefulness. This is not viewed as a cruelty, but is supposed to foster admiration of God.

**Psalm 32:9** The Psalmist admonished his readers not to be like the horse or mule "which have no understanding." The Bible sometimes refers to lazy, dirty, or irrational animals (Psalm 73:22; Proverbs 26:11; Titus 1:12; 2 Peter 2:12, 22; Jude 10).

What the Bible writers mean by "brutish" or "irrational" beasts is subject to discussion. As George Frear says, "Animals can represent stupidity as when the psalmist tells us not to be like the horse or mule that needs bit and bridle . . . ."[31] Some beasts are considered to be brighter than others. Maybe the authors who use terms like "brutish beasts" are only referring to a particular category of animals, thus not categorically labeling all animals as unintelligent.

The Jews and early Christians were well aware of how "intelligent" animals could be. After all, they kept pets, trained animals, etc. Isaiah said, "The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib" (Isaiah 1:3). Jeremiah said that the stork knows her appointed times and the turtledove, swallow, and crane observe the time of their coming (Jeremiah 8:7). In texts like these, the prophets are using their knowledge of

---

[31]George L. Frear, Jr. "Caring for Animals: Biblical Stimulus for Ethical Reflection" in Good News for Animals? (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):5.

animal intelligence as a device to shame the Israelites, because compared to most humans, most animals are not as intelligent. But in a sense, animals had more sense than the Israelites.

There was a time, the Bible said, when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon became very egotistical about his accomplishments. To teach him some humility and to refocus his attention on Jehovah, this text claims that God said,

> Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes (Daniel 4:16, 25-37).

Nebuchadnezzar was ordinarily an intelligent man but was given the mind of an animal as a learning experience. Obviously, the author of this text thought that there is a difference between these having a man's mind and having an animal's mind. When Nebuchadnezzar became normal again, he describes it like this, "At that time my reason returned to me" (verse 36). This passage evidently sets forth the view that there is a definite difference between the minds of human beings and animals.

Jesus implied that humans and animals certainly have different value systems when he said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you" (Matthew 7:6). Dogs and pigs do not really catch either the concept of holiness or the concept of religion in general, and apparently they were never meant to. Therefore, the distinction between people and animals is not merely intellectual, but spiritual.

It seems reasonable to conclude that these texts do not intend to say that animals have no intelligence whatsoever. But compared to humans in general, they

are brutish and incapable of discursive reasoning. This being true, their spiritual capacities also differ dramatically from human spiritual capacities.

**Psalm 91:3** "For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." Before guns were invented, it was common to trap birds in a variety of ways, usually by placing food strategically in a devise of capture (Amos 3:5). "Escaping the fowler's trap" or "hastening to the snare as a bird" became useful analogies for getting into or out of bad situations (124:7; Proverbs 1:17; 6:5; 7:22-23; Ecclesiastes 9:12; Jeremiah 5:26). Fowlers provided birds for several purposes. Some people ate them; other people kept them in cages as pets and played with them (Jeremiah 5:27; Job 41:5), etc.

**PROVERBS**

**Proverbs 11:22** A gold ring in a pig's snout is like a beautiful woman without discretion. Rings were put into pigs' noses to keep them from rooting and thus tearing up the soil. Here is a case where human beings try to keep an animal from doing what it does naturally. In many cases, people use animals' natural *telos* for their own purposes. But there are other situations in which they attempt to stop an animal from doing what it wants, in order for it to serve them more acceptably.

But who would put a gold ring in a pig's snout? It would be out of place, as indiscretion would out of place for a lovely woman. The two do not belong together.

**Proverbs 12:10** This is almost universally recognized as the clearest statement in the Bible regarding the proper human feelings for an animal. "A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, But the compassion of the wicked is cruel." The King James Version of 1611 renders this passage, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The Good News Bible paraphrases, "a good man takes care of his animals." The Modern Language Bible says, "A righteous man understands the needs of his livestock, but even the mercy of

the wicked is cruel." In the experience of many, righteous people do have regard for the lives of their animals. It seems to flow from the kind of tender heart that leads good people to do other good things.

This text clearly focuses on the desire of the human heart to take care of animals as fellow living creatures, not simply as bearers of instrumental value to its caretaker. Based on this text, it seems reasonable to affirm that animals deserve good treatment, and righteous persons will provide it.[32]

## ECCLESIASTES

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-22** The author of Ecclesiastes seems to be in a cynical mood throughout most of the book. This is why most people seem to think that the tenor of the book is out of character with the majority of the Bible.[33]

In this text the author said that when it comes to mortality, a human being is no better than a beast. Both must die and their bodies decay. As far as that goes, "man has no advantage over the animal." This is one of the many attributes which human beings and animals share. Death comes to all.

Perhaps in light of this passage Richard Morris comments, "Judaism came within a hair's breadth of accepting the Eastern insight that man and beast share the same fate on earth."[34] even though Genesis apparently makes an ontological distinction between human beings and animals. However, it remains true that human beings and animals are alike in many ways and the batch of obvious similarities ought

---

[32]For more on caring for animals, see Appendix F.

[33]For example, see Franz Delitzsch, Commentary on The Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950) 180; and O. S. Rankin, "Ecclesiastes: Introduction" in The Interpreter's Bible vol. V (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956):10.

[34] Richard Knowles Morris 27.

to give a human being pause when considering the *telos* and thus, the proper treatment of animals.

Along these lines, the cynic also pointed out that "a living dog is better than a dead lion." It is not unusual for someone to think of the powerful and majestic beasts as somehow greater than the lowlier, less dynamic creatures. This text assumes this hierarchy. But the point is that death is the great equalizer. A lion might be "the king of the jungle" when alive; but when it dies, the smallest dog is its superior. The text could have said that a living person is better than a dead person, but the fact that the illustration is drawn from the animal kingdom enables the writer to juxtapose two disparate animals, which makes the point in a much richer way.

Thus, all living creatures die, regardless of their position in life. But a living creature is better than a dead one. Human *telos* or animal *telos* seem to have no effect on this matter.

**Ecclesiastes 9:12** This is one of several biblical references to fishing. Isaiah mentioned the fisherman's practice of casting into the Nile river (Isaiah 19:8). Some of Jesus' hand-picked followers were professional fishermen (Matthew 4:18), he encouraged fishing on occasion (Matthew 17:27; Luke 5:4-7), and even ate fish (Luke 24:42). Jesus seems to have thought that the *telos* of fish included being caught and eaten.

**Ecclesiastes 12:4** When people reach old age, they "rise at the voice of a bird." Many people require less sleep as they age and rise early in the morning when the bird sings. This is a pleasant image of how lovely nature is and how the natural world works with such regularity that one can hear a bird's voice early each morning. I

would be fascinating to study the *telos* of a bird's voice because of all the ways in which birds use it in the natural world.[35]

## SONG OF SOLOMON

**Song of Solomon 2:14** The romantic language of this book is unparalleled in biblical literature. Its poetry incorporates several animal metaphors, adapting them to very intimate settings. In this text one lover refers to the other as "my dove." The lover is described as having eyes as doves, hair as a flock of goats, teeth like a flock shorn and fresh from the washing, breasts like two fawns, twins of a roe, and hair black as a raven (4:1-2, 5; 5:11; 6:6, 9; 7:3). Animals provided a lush, romantic dimension to the romantic thinking and expression of Bible writers.

## ISAIAH

**Isaiah 11:6-8** Isaiah prophesied about an environment yet to come in which a lamb could lie down with a lion, and a lion would eat grass like an oxen. In this place, a snake would not bite a child. A number of writers, including critics, have commented that this is the ideal vision which the Bible has of things. Gary Comstock even concludes that "the text implies here that God wants lions and lambs to lie down together"[36] and "the biblical story begins and ends with humans as vegetarians . . . ."[37] But if this is figurative language, Comstock's comments may reflect a misunderstanding of the same, and, in particular, unfamiliarity with the use of apocalyptic language. Regardless of whether the writer's intention was literal or figurative, animals supplied the imagery for many dynamic models that were included

---

[35]Most standard versions render this verse similarly, while others (New English Bible, Bible in Basic English, and Goodspeed) find the Hebrew statements and metaphor ambiguous. These render the sense of the verse as a aged person's hearing growing weak, thus the birds' song grows faint.

[36]Gary Comstock, "Pigs and Piety: A Theocentric Perspective on Food Animals" Between the Species 8 (Summer 1992):127.

[37]Comstock 125.

in prophecy (e.g., Daniel 7 and 8; Zechariah 1:8). It is difficult to imagine what the language of biblical poetry and prophecy would be without animals.

**Isaiah 32:14** This prophecy is about an area that would become a wasteland. It is described as the joy of wild donkeys. How donkeys enjoy is not stated exactly, but since they seem to enjoy eating and running wild, the text probably relates to this. Animals do not get to do a lot of the things that they would enjoy. But there is no information here as to whether it is part of and animal's *telos* to enjoy. That is, do animals deserve to enjoy certain things and thus, are human beings somehow expected to find ways like this to let animals enjoy themselves sometimes?

**EZEKIEL**

**Ezekiel 1:7-10** The four strange creatures in the prophet's vision resembled animals in some ways. In the visions that John had of the throne room of heaven, God sits on a throne surrounded by four creatures resembling several different animals. Animals are often present in apocalyptic and figurative language (Revelation 4-5) and can add a level of otherworldliness to a scene. Scenes like these in some ways exalt animals above the ordinary concept of animal life because they are so closely associated with God's presence.

**Ezekiel 5:17** God said that he would send upon the wicked people "evil beasts," i.e., beasts that would cause calamity and destruction among the people. The apostle Paul quoted a similar reference in a Cretan poet's words, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). Some animals are thought of as sweet and innocent, while others are considered sinister and dangerous. Yet, it does not seem that they were viewed as intrinsically morally reprehensible because there is no indication that they are moral agents. The evil spoken of here definitely has a negative connotation, but does not appear to be of a moral nature.

**Ezekiel 21:21** The king of Babylon sought insight into the unknown. One method of divination he used was liver examination. The priest removed an animal's liver and closely studied it for signs and omens. The king was not an Israelite, and some biblical texts say that God condemned divination (Deuteronomy 18:10), but this was a normal practice in the ancient Near East (and several places in the world today as well). Since God specifically condemned this practice, it does not seem to fall within the boundaries of biblical attitudes about animal *telos*.

**Ezekiel 34** Whereas God is a good shepherd, he characterized the leadership of Israel as bad shepherds. Bad shepherds feed themselves and slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock (vs. 2-3), do not strengthen the sickly, do not heal the diseased, do not bind the broken, do not bring back the scattered, do not seek the lost, and dominate others with force and severity (vs. 4). The text shows that when sheep have shepherds like these, it results in terrible mistreatment of both the animals and the people involved.

Thus, the texts says that God would provide for the Israelites. He would not only do the things the poor leaders/shepherds failed to do but would lead the sheep (the people) to good pasture and clear water (vs. 17-19), "eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods" (vs. 25), and otherwise properly care for them.

The section closes with the statement, "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God" (vs. 31). This passage does not lead one to think of sheep as mere objects or machines. They should be cared for not only for humans' sake, but for their own comfort's sake (cf. 34:5; 34:8-15; Amos 3:12; Nahum 3:18; Zechariah 11:16). Bad shepherds clearly carry a pejorative connotation in this

text. That seems to imply that sheep need and deserve a good shepherd. The text also implies a number of things about what a good shepherd should do for the sheep.

**Ezekiel 38:20** God said that the fish, birds, beasts, etc., will shake at his presence. When the text says that "even they" will shake, it may emphasize their lack of understanding. In other words, animals are not that smart compared to humans, but even they will tremble before God. As unusual as it might seems at first, this is not an unusual rhetorical device in the Bible. In one of John's visions of heaven, he saw all of creation praise the lamb (Revelation 5:13).

The Bible sometimes pictures animals as in tune with spiritual happenings. The point seems to be that God's message is so basic or so clear that even nature is involved and responds (cf. Joel 1:18, 20). The apostle Paul said that the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will (Romans 8:19-23; cf. Colossians 1:20). While many consider this figurative language, writers such as Frear think that Paul,

> describes the whole creation, not just humanity, as in birth pangs, stretching its neck toward liberation from its bondage to decay, eager for the glory that belongs to all the children of God.[38]

It seems clear that somehow, in some way, to some degree, nature shares in a kind of desire (perhaps unconsciously or figuratively speaking) for release from the situation it was placed in due to sin entering the world.

Compare this to the situation in Jonah 3:7-8. After hearing Jonah's sermon commanding the people of Nineveh to repent, the king of Nineveh commanded everyone including animals to fast, cry to God, and turn from their evil ways.

---

[38]Frear 8.

Apparently, people could see to it that the animals did not eat or drink; but could the animals cry to God and turn from evil, repent, confess, or do evil in the first place?

Surely, the king was only trying to make a point with this command. Not only did he want humans to repent, but by including animals in his statements, it somehow adds a note of severity to the circumstances. They had sinned so terribly, that even the animals needed to repent. Seen in this way, the inclusion of animals is a type of hyperbole, exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. This could also be considered in texts which talk about punishing animals along with their owners, and about God's speaking to the animals and making a covenant with them, etc. If this is the case, this aspect of animal *telos* means that animals help make human beings more acutely aware of the sin problem.

These occasions are paralleled in a way by Joel 2:22. Although the Israelites faced "the day of the Lord," a day of devastation which would hurt them, their crops, and their animals (1:15-20), the peoples' penitence would bring about reconciliation with God. The text says that God reassured the land, the animals, and the people that he would bless them once again. "Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice," and "be not afraid, ye beasts of the field" and "ye children of Zion" because pastures, trees, and vines will bear fruit again for survival.

Does the text mean that God literally spoke to dirt, rocks, trees, dogs, camels, and cows? Do they recognize the words being used here? It seems more reasonable to conclude that these statements are metaphorical, the point being that human beings are to understand that God's protection is complete, thorough. Animals helped human beings understand the sin problem, but also helped them understand the forgiveness of God.

**DANIEL**

**Daniel 6:7** Daniel's enemies enacted a law condemning prayer to gods other than their own because they knew that he would not abide by it. He prayed anyway. As punishment, the king cast him into a den of lions, expecting him to be devoured. However, God shut the lions' mouths so that they could not kill Daniel (6:22). When Daniel was found to be safe, the king realized that Daniel's enemies had connived it all and promptly tossed them into the den of lions where they did not fare as well as the previous occupant (6:24; cf. Hebrews 11:33).

This is another case in which people use animals by basically allowing them to do what they would naturally do in similar situations (cf. Genesis 8:6-12), except that people have artificially arranged the situation for their own purposes. The humans kept them in a small and artificial environment (possibly a cruel act in itself; cf. 2 Timothy 4:17), but at the very least the lions get some good meals in the deal. The king was not a Jew, and thus not amenable to all of their laws, but apparently considered keeping a lion's den as within the boundaries of animal *telos*.

A case in the New Testament which could possibly relate to this is when the apostle Paul said, "if after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus . . ." (1 Corinthians 15:32). It is not clear from the text alone whether he actually fought wild animals while traveling in the Ephesus area, whether he was put into an arena to fight with wild animals for the entertainment of those in power (this would not be unusual treatment of Christians during that time period), or whether he simply spoke metaphorically of the opponents of his preaching whom he faced in the city (cf. Acts 19:1:-41). Either way, fighting wild beasts was both literally and figuratively an extremely hazardous and challenging thing to do. But putting people into an arena

with wild animals either to fight them or to be killed by them was not unknown during this time.

**JONAH**

**Jonah 4:11** Apparently, Jonah wanted all of the Ninevites to perish. It may seem as though God could have made his point simply by talking about the great number of human beings who would be destroyed if Jonah had his way. But Jonah was acting heartlessly and needed to learn to have compassion for life. So, God said that in the city of Nineveh there were more than sixty thousand persons and much cattle. It is as though he was saying, "Jonah, how can you so ruthlessly want to destroy so many living beings?" God does regard the lives of animals, and criticizes a man for not regarding them.

**HABAKKUK**

**Habakkuk 1:14** This text compares people with fish of the sea and creeping things that have no ruler. Much of the animal world is very highly organized, and extremely efficient. More than one Bible writer described the wondrous cooperation exhibited by the animal world despite their having no centralized organizational leader (cf. Proverbs 30:27).

**ZECHARIAH**

**Zechariah 11:4, 7** God told the prophet to feed the flock of slaughter, i.e., the flock that had been marked for death. Some animals were raised to live and provide services, and some were raised to die and provide products.

On a number of occasions, the prophets said that one of the reasons why Israel was destroyed was that they had mistreated the weaker members of society (the poor, widows, orphans, et al.). One has to wonder whether there is an analogy or implication here for the treatment of animals. Namely, is it wrong to mistreat and/or

take advantage of weak humans but not wrong to so treat weak and dependent animals? In other words, it seems almost axiomatic that it is incumbent upon "those who can" to take special care of "those who can't."

**MATTHEW**

It may seem odd that the four gospel accounts of Jesus' life are included here under the rubric of the Mosaic Period rather than in the Christian Period. Technically, however, the Christian religion did not begin until after his death (Hebrews 9:15-17). Jesus lived under and in accordance with the Mosaic law (Matthew 5:17-19; Galatians 4:4), so it seems appropriate to include the gospel accounts here.

**Matthew 3:16** At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove. If "form" denotes the resemblance of a dove, then it is quite a compliment to dovehood that God's Spirit would take on its appearance for any period of time. The dove's beauty, gracefulness, and serene appearance likely played a role in this.

**Matthew 6:26** Jesus said that people should not worry about what they will eat or wear. After all, God feeds and clothes the birds. "Are you not of more value than they?" Jesus later said that people are more valuable than *many* sparrows (Matthew 10:31). There is no ambiguity here. People are of greater value than birds.

Jesus also eschewed ambiguity when he said that people are of more value than sheep (Matthew 12:12). The hypocrites did not want Jesus to heal a man on the Sabbath day, but he pointed out that if they had a sheep stuck in a ditch on the Sabbath they would rescue it. They could conceivably get the animal on the following day, but they would not want the animal to thrash about and suffer all night while they sit and relax. He essentially asked them, "You can rescue an ox or sheep out of a ditch and give water to a donkey on the Sabbath; so why can't I heal a man?!" (Luke 13:15-16) Men are at least as good as donkeys.

In making his point, he also showed that even these religiously hard-hearted hypocrites were soft-hearted toward their animals. Richard Kingston wrongly comments, "Actually, such attention was permitted on the Sabbath 'only if the animal were in extreme pain or in danger of dying,' a regulation which not everyone would term humane."[39] But the point was not about what the law allowed, but what the men were willing to do for an animal but not for a man.

What does it mean that people are of "more value than animals"? It apparently means that God's ontological hierarchy of creation places humans (made in the image of God) in a different category than the creature not made in God's image. At least it seems reasonable to say that human beings are more important than animals. More important in what sense? Does he love them more? Well, the Old Testament was clear that when it came to forgiving human sins, seemingly millions of animals died so that human beings could enjoy a better relationship with God. Since it was not human beings dying for animals to have a better relationship with God, that may imply something about ontological hierarchy and animal *telos*.

The texts do not spell out the details of how this works out in all the aspects of daily life and includes no necessary implications for humane treatment of animals. But it is a clear and unambiguous statement from Jesus himself about who is more important to God, people or animals.

**Matthew 8:20** Jesus said that the foxes had holes, and birds had nests, but he did not have a place to lay his head. God has provided a way for the animals to acquire natural homes, but not so with Jesus.

---

[39]A. Richard Kingston, "Christian Duty and Animal Welfare," Theology 71 (June 1968): 251.

Jesus used many animals in his teachings, which made his profound statements more earthy and thus more easily grasped. Examples include: it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:24), the hypocrites strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel (Matthew 23:24), he would have gathered his children together like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings (Matthew 23:37), where the carcass is, there the eagles/vultures will be gathered (Matthew 24:28), as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so will the Lord of the judgment divide the good from those who are evil (Matthew 25:32-33), and if the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered (Luke 13:32). He sent the apostles out to preach as lambs in the midst of wolves (Luke 10:3), and gave them authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions (Luke 10:19). He sent them to tell the ruler something with the preface, "Go and say to that fox" (Luke 13:32); and he incorporated many more animal references into his teachings. Through the gospel accounts, animals have helped multiplied millions of people around the world to understand the teachings of Jesus.

**Matthew 8:30-34** This passage is one of the most frequently quoted in the current controversy because (1) the text seems to set forth the view that a man is worth more than many swine and (2) some say that Jesus sent a herd of swine running into the sea where they drowned.[40]

The text says that a man had been so tormented by indwelling demons that he had to be bound in chains. The demons asked Jesus to send them into a nearby herd of swine. When he allowed them to do so (see the parallel account in Mark 5:13), the

---

[40]For example, see Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain, Animal Welfare and Human Values (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993):16; and Singer, Animal Liberation 191.

pigs rushed into the sea. Jesus did not send them there. Of course, Jesus allowed the spirits to enter the swine and also allowed them to drown, so one could argue that Jesus knew what would happen and is at least indirectly responsible. But the text does not picture it as something Jesus did. When the spirits entered into the swine, for some reason they ran straight for the water. Clark thinks that it may have been "the pigs' decision to drown rather than be slaughtered, once they had received the inspiration of a host of knowledgeable spirits."[41]

The action of the pigs was apparently considered to be evidence that Jesus had sent the demons out of the man. The implication is that this evidence was worth the lives of many pigs. Indeed, as a result, several people saw the event and reported it far and wide.

**Matthew 21:12** Some people had set up small businesses at the temple in Jerusalem, exchanging money and selling animals so that visiting worshipers could offer the proper sacrifices. Selling animals was common enough, but these businessmen were located on temple grounds and were selling them specifically for religious uses. Jesus cast them all out of the temple area, saying that they must not make God's place a place of business.

Jesus also cast out the sheep and oxen, surprisingly using a whip! (John 2:15). Why use a whip? Would that not inflict suffering and perhaps injury on animals that did not even come there of their own accord? Although it is not clear whether the whip actually contacted any animals, after reading the gospel accounts about Jesus, one should not be surprised to find that he might have made contact with an animal. This is not to say that he repeatedly beat them. But that is not the same thing as giving

---

[41]Clark 198.

an ox a swat in order to get him moving. Is it possible to imagine Jesus ruthlessly beating a sheep when he speaks so highly of the loving relationship between a shepherd and his sheep (cf. John 10)?

**Matthew 22:4** Jesus sent disciples to prepare his dinner, for which oxen and fatted cattle were killed. Jesus was not a vegetarian. He ate meat. Even after his resurrection, Jesus wanted the disciples to know that His physical body was raised, not a spirit. In order to prove it, he ate a piece of broiled fish (Matthew 26:20-21; Luke 24:42-43).

This is another implication about animal *telos* from the life of Jesus. He lived under the Mosaic law system with its sacrifices and meat eating (Galatians 4:4), did not espouse vegetarianism, ate fish, and lamb, and rode a donkey colt.[42] As Turner states it, "Christ was no vegetarian, nor did he expect others to be."[43] Are Christians allowed to follow the dietary example of their founder? He did this in perfect harmony with both Old Testament law and New Testament teachings. The New Testament writers testify that He was sinless in so doing (e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrew 4:15).

**MARK**

**Mark 16:18** Jesus said that believers would take up serpents. However, the text does not specify a reason for why someone would want to take up a serpent. Maybe an example of what Jesus meant was when Paul and his friends were sitting around a fire and a viper came out of the firewood and fastened onto his hand. The locals thought he was a murderer who was being punished for his crime. But he shook it off into the fire with no harmful results, and they were amazed (Acts 28:3-6).

---

[42]Boyce and Lutes 37.

[43]E. S. Turner, All Heaven in a Rage (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964):23.

**LUKE**

**Luke 2:7** It seems noteworthy that the baby Jesus was laid in a manger, a feeding place for animals, and possibly in the company of animals. Maybe this allowed him to identify more closely with the human condition since he was not born in a castle, but in humble surroundings. The Messiah being born in an animal residence might even raise the level of respect for animals a bit.

**Luke 2:8-20** It also seems noteworthy that shepherds (keeping watch over their flock) were the first to come and honor him. Neither kings nor the wealthy saw him first, but men who raised animals.

**Luke 16:21** Jesus told the story of a beggar named Lazarus who lay beside a rich man's gate. Dogs licked his sores. This is another instance where a Bible writer points out a common trait of an animal. But Morris says that this detail in the story puts dogs in a bad light. He thinks that Jesus implied that the dogs actually caused the beggar's death. Morris also dislikes the fact that dogs head the list of abominable things in Revelation 22:15.[44]

Both of these objections are inaccurate. First, dogs customarily lick sores as experience shows. Wives' tales even affirm the curative properties of this activity. Jesus may have simply recounted the events the way they happened. But he did not originate the idea. The Bible just incorporated the language of the times and places in which it was produced.

---

[44]Richard Knowles Morris 28.

Second, commentators generally agree that "dogs" in revelation 22:15 is a euphemism either for "Sodomites" in particular (see Deuteronomy 23:18), or perhaps for "filthy ones" in general, but not actual animals.[45]

## SUMMARY OF MOSAIC PERIOD DATA

The Mosaic period had a lot in common with the Patriarchal period in regard to animal *telos*. Animals were used for food, clothing, property, laborers, sacrifices, companions, to enhance military power, to teach important life-lessons, as instruments of God's blessing and/or wrath, as objects of beauty and decoration, and as providers of comfort, etc. Not only did they serve human beings in these ways, but the text clearly says that God commanded some of these uses and tacitly approved others. Exceptions would be when animal lives were "wasted" (i.e., their lives were taken without just cause, given their *telos*) for someone's selfish ulterior motives. With so many potential areas of usefulness and with the many possible relationships they afforded, it is little wonder that animals were so valuable to the people.

Several texts from both of these periods suggest that animals were to be cared for not only because of their instrumental value to their owners, but because they simply deserve care by virtue of what they are. Aware of this, Bernard Rollin says,

> Clearly, the Bible recognizes that animals are used as means. But the Bible also recognizes that they are ends in themselves, with value and function of their own, independent of the uses to which we put them . . . These ancient regulations, virtually forgotten, bespeak an eloquent awareness of the status of animals as ends in themselves.[46]

---

[45]For example, see Homer Hailey, Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979):430; and R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943):667.

[46]Bernard E. Rollin, Animal Rights and Human Morality. rev. ed. (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992):89.

In other words, if a person believes that animals were created in order to serve specific purposes for humans, this does not necessarily preclude her responsibility for respecting, cherishing, and properly caring for animals (more on this point in chapter three). If a parent gives a child a toy to play with, does she not expect the child to respect the item and would she not be upset if the child were to destroy it? How much more would this be the case if she gave the child a living creature? Even so, how much more it should be the case for a Jew, believing that God gave animals to serve humanity. The living creature deserves respect as a living thing, created by God, resembling human beings in so many ways although created to serve them. The Old Testament texts allow for this latitude of thought. It is not stated in so many words, but as Morris says,

> Here and there in the Old Testament are hints that man's concern for the sometimes painful lot of other beings, especially his beasts of burden, might flower into a tender and all-embracing compassion.[47]

Different conservative Christian thinkers might look at this information from the Old Testament in different ways. This paper takes the position that there are general principles in the Old Testament which someone who seeks to do the right thing will observe. For example, the righteous man cares for his animals (Proverbs 12:10), righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34), and the Lord will guide one's paths if she trusts him with all her heart (Proverbs 3:5-6). But Christians generally believe that the specific rules which comprise the Mosaic Law are not applicable today in the same way they were when given to the Israelite nation since the New Testament has replaced the Law (Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:1-13). For example, must a righteous person today offer a burnt offering of a lamb every morning

---

[47]Richard Knowles Morris 27.

and evening, wear garments of unmixed materials, have priests who wear specific types of clothing, and keep servants?

Therefore, although some effort has been made here to show that certain texts could have modern applications, it would take a more exegetical study to decide which of these insights from the Old Testament should be applicable today and whether it should be applied in general principles or in specific details, depending on contextual considerations. The more careful application of each of these texts to modern situations would be worked out in connection with a hermeneutical format, linguistic study, historical backgrounds of texts, and so forth. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, this information can be assessed as part of the big picture regarding the biblical information available about animal *telos*.

## III. The Christian Period

Generally speaking, the Christian writings of the New Testament do not contain as specific or as numerous statements about animal *telos* as does the Old Testament. There are some specific texts, however, which stand out as clear pronouncements on the issue.

Many writers believe that overall, Christianity encourages the proper treatment of animals, but "we must realize that this is not due to specific teaching on the subject, but to seeing the implications of its central ethics of love."[48] Turner puts his own twist on this idea when he says,

> the best that can be said is that Christianity, in its unsophisticated form, fostered a mental attitude in which respect for animals could subsist naturally with man's love for his neighbors.[49]

---

[48]A. Richard Kingston, "Christian Duty and Animal Welfare," Theology 71 (1968):251.
[49]Turner 22.

Niven agrees insofar as,

> There is no explicit statement on the part of Jesus recorded in the Gospels that cruelty to animals is one of the great sins. On the other hand, there is quite a lot said implicitly.[50]

The question to keep in mind throughout this section, then, is as Pinches and McDaniel say, "What, after all, *is* an animal according to Christian theology?"[51] According to these writers the answer to this question is going to be more implicit than explicit.

**ACTS**

**Acts 10:9-16** Peter was about to go and preach to some non-Jews, but he did not know it yet. Ordinarily, he would have been hesitant to do that because of some of the barriers which existed between Jew and Gentile. So God sent Peter a vision to help prepare him for what was going to happen. He told him to kill and eat beasts and creeping things which had been unclean under the Mosaic system. The vision came to him three times. Although the obvious message had to do with eating animals, the vision also contained a message about Christian Gentiles. God told Peter, "What God has cleansed do not make common." Later in the chapter Peter realizes that God is no respecter of persons and that God accepts Jew and Gentile alike as Christians (verses 34-35).

While acknowledging the deep theological ramifications of this text, this paper must focus on the aspect of the vision which involved animal *telos*. God said that there is no longer a distinction between clean and unclean meat. That was a substantive change from a system which had been intact for fifteen hundred years of

---

[50]Niven 23.
[51]Pinches and McDaniel, viii.

the Mosaic law system. Therefore, this vision opened the floodgates for much more animal death and the consumption of far more flesh. But it is important that the text attributes this message to deity, divinely authorizing these acts.

**Acts 17:26** The apostle Paul preached that God made all people of one blood, but no mention of animals. He did not say that humans and animals are related, or made of one blood, or anything similar. This seems to reinforce the idea that human beings and animals are qualitatively different.

## 1 CORINTHIANS

**1 Corinthians 15:39** This text affirms another important distinction between human beings and animals. "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." The contextual discussion was about the kind of human body that will be resurrected from the grave. Paul explained that there are different types of bodies, flesh, creatures, different terrestrial and celestial bodies, and even different celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars). The difference between human and animal flesh is significant, therefore, but precisely how distinct they are or how wide the gap between them is, Paul did not explain. Physiologically speaking, of course, there are many similarities, as this paper has noted several times. But the fact remains that this biblical text points out a substantial difference between human flesh and animal flesh.

## HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews discusses parallels between the Patriarchal and Mosaic systems on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, with an emphasis on Christ's superiority to them both. No details will be given at this point because this was covered already in the section on the Mosaic law. There is, however, a lot here about sacrifices, the blood of bulls and goats, etc., and how Christ's sacrifice is like them in a

way, but superior to them. Therefore, animal *telos* is crucial to the central notion of the book, but the book does not really add to what the Old Testament has already said about it except that it heavily accentuates the view that Christ was sacrificed on the cross as an offering for all humanity. Because of his perfect sacrifice, all animal sacrifices ceased. Thus, not only was there the depth of spiritual significance here, but there were ramifications in the animal world in that millions of animals lived longer lives as non-sacrifices and many others were not bred into existence especially to die vicarious deaths on altars.

**JAMES**

**James 3:3** James discussed the power which the tongue possesses for good and bad, and how difficult it is to control this member of the body. In order to illustrate this predicament he referred to animals. He said, "Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind" (James 3:7). He described how people put bits into the mouths of horses so that they may obey. That is, people guide the horse's large body with a small piece of wood or metal in its mouth. Bits, halters, bridles, etc., helped people to control larger animals (cf. Jeremiah 46:4; Revelation 14:20).

This behavior appears to fall in line with other biblical texts. If it is within an animal's *telos* to obey people and do certain works for them, a control device would be helpful for animals that are unwilling to respond properly. Is that allowable within the parameters of biblical teaching, or is it simply an unauthorized practice that people did? This is not clearly stated in the text. But even if it is an animal's *telos* to serve humanity, it would be good to ask how far a person can go in order to get an animal to do what he or she wants.

## SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN PERIOD DATA

There are tidbits in this section about God's care for animals, condoning eating meat, taming or controlling animals, and the like. But the substantive change is that since the Mosaic law is no longer observed under the Christian dispensation, its sacrifices and distinctions between clean and unclean meats are specifically condemned. There is also much more emphasis on the need for a Christian to be loving, tender hearted, treating others as he or she would want to be treated, etc. The text does not specifically direct these matters toward animals or toward many other situations that might arise, but surely there is fallout in any number of areas of life which are not explicitly addressed. Of course, there are the statements from Jesus that a man is worth more than birds or donkeys which seems to establish an order of some type of value.

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CATALOG

The relevant biblical texts should be separated into three categories. First, a distinction must be made between texts which claim that God directly approved of particular beliefs about animals and, second, texts where there is clear Divine condemnation of particular beliefs about animals. Third, in some texts human beings treat or speak of animals in particular ways, but neither Divine approval nor disapproval if affirmed. The third category gives insight into how animals were treated and thought of by some people, but this does not mean that it was either normal or moral, nor does the text claim Divine approval for the act. These three categories will help to somewhat define the biblical attitudes about animal *telos*.

### I. Category One: Actions which the texts say have Divine Approval

1. Creation order led to creation of human beings.

2. Human beings were made in God's image.

3. Originally, human beings were given only plants, not animals, to eat.

4. God gave human beings dominion over the earth.

5. God told human beings to subdue the earth.

6. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life.

7. Eden, which included animals, was made for human beings.

8. No animal was suitable for the man's mate.

9. Man named the animals.

10. Animals were often punished along with people.

11. Animal skins were used as clothing for human beings.

12. Animals were sacrificed as religious offerings to God.

13. Animals were often killed in battle along with human beings.

14. Many animals were saved in the ark.

15. God remembered both people and animals in the ark.

16. God condoned meat eating and the use of animal products such as fat and milk.

17. If an animal killed a human being, it had to be killed.

18. God made a covenant with both people and animals after the flood.

19. God blessed human beings with gifts of animals and flocks, sometimes in huge numbers.

20. God told Abram to kill animals and use their divided carcasses in a covenant ceremony.

21. Riding animals was condoned.

22. Animals bearing burdens was condoned.

23. The shepherd image was often used of God.

24. Jonah should have considered the potential loss of both human and animal life in Nineveh.

25. God created snakes, frogs, and other animals for momentary use, then killed many when their usefulness for the immediate situation ended.

26. The Israelites had to kill a lamb for Passover.

27. God commanded that animal skins be used for constructing the Tabernacle.

28. God commanded that animal blood be used for ceremonial cleansing.

29. The use of ram horns for instruments was condoned.

30. Many animal metaphors were used in prose and poetry.

31. Animal figures as decoration in Temple, palace, et al., were condoned.

32. The righteous man cares for the well-being of his beast.

33. Animals are not as intelligent as people.

34. Fishing is condoned.

35. Animals are not as valuable as people in God's sight.

36. God takes care of animals with food, drink, and shelter.

37. Jesus used a whip to drive animals being sold for sacrifices out of the temple.

38. Human flesh and animal flesh are different.

**II. <u>Category Two: Actions which the texts say carry Divine Condemnation</u>**

1. Do not allow an animal to stand overburdened.

2. Do not leave an animal in the ditch.

3. Do not have sex with animals.

4. Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

5. Do not make idols of animals.

6. Do not kill a cow or ewe along with their young on the same day.

7. Do not take a bird along with its eggs or little ones at the same time.

8. Do not unequally yoke a donkey and an ox.

9. Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading grain.

10. Do not mistreat the flock.

11. Do not callously wish the needless death of an animal.

**III. Category Three: Actions which the texts say are Neither Divinely Condoned Nor Condemned**

1. Noah sent ravens and doves out to search for dry land.

2. Nimrod was famous for being a hunter.

3. Abram's hospitality led him to kill a lamb to feed visitors.

4. Animals were used for selfish/shady reasons (as for deceiving Isaac).

5. Animals and animal parts were used as weapons (such as clubs or pulling chariots).

6. Animals were kept as pets.

7. An animal's ability to carry burdens was used as a measurement of weight.

8. People left their animals and fled from their enemies.

9. Animals were included in some population census accounts.

10. Animals were used for naming places.

11. Animals were used in humor.

12. Animals were used for postal service.

13. Birds were trapped and caged.

14. A ring was put in a swine's snout.

15. A lion's den was kept.

16. Animals were trained/tamed for certain jobs.

This is the catalog of biblical texts that comprise a compendium of biblical attitudes about animal *telos*. These texts constitute the cross section of ideas which set the parameters for what might be called biblical attitudes about the subject. Their implications, however, are not always so clear. How much latitude do these texts allow when it comes to animal *telos* and related questions such as establishing rules for treating animals in a mechanized, technological society?

Appendix B

## Genesis 1:28 and Dominion

Genesis 1:28 is probably the Bible verse most often referenced in the animal/environment controversy. In this passage God tells the human beings to subdue the earth and gives them dominion over it. This is not the only biblical text that touches on the subject. Others present a similar view.

> For thou hast made [man] but little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, Yea, and the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Psalm 8:5-8).

Psalm 115:16 may also set forth this view when it says, "The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; But the earth hath he given to the children of men."

The key terms in the discussion are "dominion" and "subdue." These words apparently call up nightmarish figures for writers like Clarence Glacken. He says,

> The acts of man ranging from deforestation to air pollution and nuclear warfare and the multiplication of man have given dramatic proof of his obedience to the orders of God for all life to multiply and for human life, in addition to multiplying, to have dominion over the rest of creation.[1]

Thus, for some of the writers noted in chapter one of this paper, chaos and anti-environmentalism logically follow from the terms "dominion" and "subdue."

The word translated "subdue" in this text is the Hebrew verb "כבשׁ," which usually means to "subject someone" or to "make subservient."[2] Brown, Driver, and Briggs' lexicon says that the word is used in Genesis chapter one to mean "subdue,

---

[1]Clarence J. Glacken, "Man Against Nature: An Outmoded Concept" The Environment Crisis: Man's Struggle to Live With Himself Harold W. Helfrich, Jr., ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970):129-130.

[2]William L. Holladay, "כבשׁ," A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971):151.

dominate, the earth."[3] Since the phrase in Genesis 1:28 is spoken in the form of an imperative, the text represents God as saying, "Be in control of the earth." Or, it could be translated, "Bring the earth into subjection."

The word translated "dominion" in verses twenty-six and twenty-eight is the Hebrew word "hdr," which Holladay's lexicon defines as "rule, govern" as used in Genesis chapter one.[4] Brown, Driver, and Briggs concur.[5] Numbers 24:19 uses the same word for reigning or prevailing over others. But the rule could be a good one or a bad one; the word itself is neutral about that. Ahab (or Hitler) could do it, or Solomon (or Lincoln) could do it. The text represents God as saying, "Rule over the fish, birds, and every land animal."

Based on their lexical definitions and their contextual use in Genesis chapter one, these two words (subdue and dominion) alone do not give humanity license to treat the earth in just any way they choose with no restrictions. Both Linzey and Westermann agree that "while dominion means domination it is not of a random kind, but *permitted* in accordance with what God wills."[6] Westermann employs a useful analogy to illustrate this view.

> As lord of his realm, the king is responsible not only for the realm; he is the one who bears and mediates blessings for the realm entrusted to him. Man would fail in his royal office of dominion over the earth were he to exploit the earth's resources to the detriment of the land, plant life, animals, rivers and seas.[7]

In other words, if the president appointed a governor to rule over a state and gave him authority over its inhabitants, not only does this station of power not imply

---

[3]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, eds. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906):461.

[4]Holladay 333.

[5]Brown, Driver, Briggs 921-922.

[6]Linzey 15.

[7]Ibid.

license for abuse, it implies the very opposite. If he were to abuse his delegated authority, strict punishment awaits. It is a solemn position which he has been given, and he must take good care of it or he will greatly displease the higher power who saw fit to give him such a responsibility. This is why Linzey believes that "This dominion is inescapably fraught with moral responsibility for the reason that man is a moral being under God who is understood as responsibly moral."[8] If this is the case, dominion is not without profound responsibilities. Rollin adds yet another analogy, "Clearly, 'dominion' does not entail or allow abuse, any more than does the dominion a parent enjoys over a child."[9]

Genesis 1:28 says that the first man and woman were told to subdue and rule over the earth. What they were given to care for was valuable property. It certainly seems reasonable to think that they were expected to be responsible caretakers. Surely, no one who abused or harmed a valuable piece of property which they were temporarily keeping for a superior, would be praised in so doing. It is too valuable, too lovely, too irreplaceable, and the true owner's power and authority too imminent. Even so, there are such things as evil, untrustworthy, and destructive caretakers in the world. But this distinction must be emphasized. It is not the charge to subdue and have dominion that necessitates the destructive behavior. It is the individual's choices that cause the harm, not the charge itself.

That is why writers like Alastair Gunn use a stewardship model for man's responsibility to animals.[10] A good steward is faithful to her superior (1 Corinthians 4:2), and a bad one is not. But it is not the stewardship itself that is at fault, it is the

---

[8]Ibid. 16.

[9]Bernard E. Rollin, Animal Rights and Human Morality, rev. ed. (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992):90.

[10]Alastair Gunn, "Traditional Ethics and the Moral Status of Animals," Environmental Ethics 5 (1983):148-153.

individual steward. Gunn claims that the same is true with human beings and their stewardship of nature. There are good stewards of nature who take care of it, and bad ones who neglect and destroy it. But it is not reasonable to hold the order to subdue and have dominion responsible for the behavior of the bad stewards, particularly since free moral agents are involved.

In order to carry out faithfully their God-given task, therefore, human beings must carefully watch over what has been given them. Otherwise, they are bad stewards and subject to severe consequences. As Ruether points out,

> that dominion which they were to exercise over the world of domesticated animals and plants was as servants and delegates of God, and not as owners in their own right. This surely was understood in terms of (male) humans as good caretakers of the animals and plants of the earth, and not as exploiters or destroyers of them.[11]

Jay McDaniel also uses the stewardship concept among his suggestions for prudent use of the earth.[12] He believes the stewardship model should cause people to think about future generations of both humans and animals.

Linzey makes a similar observation when he says in an interview, "If dominion really meant a license to do what you want with creation, it wouldn't have a prohibition about eating meat" as was the case before Genesis chapter nine and with particular types of meat under the Mosaic system.[13] Renowned theologian, John R. W. Stott adds, "True, man has been given dominion over earth and animals, but dominion is not another word for domination, still less for destruction."[14] Jim Gustafson holds a similar view.

---

[11]Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Men, Women, and Beasts" Good News for Animals? (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993):15.

[12]Jay McDaniel, "Land Ethics, Animal Rights, and Process Theology," Process Studies 17.

[13]Stafford 22.

[14]John R. W. Stott, "Christians and Animals" Christianity Today 22 (February 10, 1978):38.

> While man, by virtue of human capacities, has a special dominion, nonetheless all things are "good," and not just good for us. Special dominion implies special accountability as much as special value.[15]

Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that terms like dominion and subjection do not necessarily carry negative connotations. Rather than licensing a "Devil may care" attitude toward nature, these terms may require a "responsible caretaker" approach. Based upon the simple definitions of the words subdue and dominion, one cannot conclude that humans may abuse either the environment or animals in just any way they please.

---

[15]Gustafson 109.

Appendix C

## Genesis 4:4 and Sacrifice

Although the biblical text does not specify that Abel used the method of burnt sacrifice, his offering of an animal is ordinarily thought of as the first biblical account of such (Genesis 4:4). The fact that people sacrificed animals, however, does not necessarily imply that human beings either should not or did not feel anything toward the animals they killed. It might even have detracted from the act if the human being felt nothing toward the animal. Sperling says that according to the Torah and Jewish tradition, "A deaf man could not be a butcher because he might not hear the cries of animals."[1] It seems that when innocent creatures were killed vicariously, to a great extent the awfulness of sin was made clearer. In the practice of animal sacrifice, humanity's well being, salvation, and relationship with God depended on animals. Words like purification, ransom, oblation, atonement, forgiveness, and other theologically important concepts are all precipitated on the sacrifice of animals (Leviticus 1:2-4; 4:20, 26, 35).

It is important to note that for the people who offered animals as sacrifices, animals were not "nothing." Animals were very important to the people. Imagine offering a sacrifice to God that was virtually worthless. For example, if a person offers a handful of dirt as a sacrifice to God, not only is it not a very costly sacrifice, not only does it lack theological significance and human angst, but dirt just is not very substantive and thus is not much of a sacrifice for a person to offer.

The text depicts a situation in which God did not command that people offer Him gifts of rocks, dirt, grass, or water. The texts say that he commanded people to

---

[1] Animal Liberators 29.

kill animals in certain situations in order to appease him. Taking a life is inscrutable, awful, terrible, didactic, anguishing, but theologically pregnant. The ultimate significance of sacrificing animals may not have been fully understood by the ancients who did not have the benefit of hindsight, for sacrificing animals foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah, the perfect sacrifice. In addition to extinguishing a life, the Mosaic law later said that the sacrificed animal was to be the very best of the herd or flock, the one that would ordinarily be most highly prized. It was to be unblemished and the purest of the group (Leviticus 22:18-25).

When the Mosaic law was delivered at Mount Sinai, the means and modes of sacrifices were specifically regulated in extensive detail. The priest had to lay his hands on the offered bullock's head, dip his fingers in its blood, sprinkle the blood, pour out the blood at the altar, deal properly with the entrails and dung in accordance with instructions, wash the entrails, use the head properly, boil the flesh, etc. (Exodus 29:10-25, 31).

There were occasions on which certain kings of Israel had thousands of animals sacrificed at ostentatious ceremonies. On these special occasions people took it upon themselves to multiply the sacrifices many times in an attempt to more abundantly praise God (2 Chronicles 30:24; 35:7-9). At one event, so many animals were offered that there were not enough priests to sacrifice them all (2 Chronicles 29:34; 1 Kings 8:5, 63).

Appendix D

## Genesis 6:7 and Animals Punished Due to Human Error

Naturally, it would be difficult to destroy all humans in a flood without also destroying the animals that lived on the earth. Then why not just cause all human beings to drop dead? Why kill the animals as well? The express purpose of the flood is that everything that is on the earth shall die (6:17), "every living thing that I have made" (7:14).

As in the flood, several other times in the God of the Old Testament required animals to suffer punishment along with their caretakers. One can only wonder about the reasons for this practice. In those cases, the animals do not seem to be implicated in the wrongdoing of their owners. The blame is always on the humans. But although the animals do not suffer the guilt of their owners, they do suffer the consequences of it. It may be that if a human community were completely wiped out (as sometimes happened when the Israelite nation worked their way through sections of Palestine), the suffering of domesticated animals would be greater if they were left to starve or be killed by predators than if they were killed along with their owners in the first place. Regarding the flood, imagine if God had selected some means of destroying the human population without killing the animals with them. How many domesticated animals would starve, die of thirst, fall victim to predators, etc., with only Noah and his family to care for them? As interesting as the speculations on these situations become, the text does not clearly answer these questions.

Animals also suffered some of the consequences of human sins in Saul's attack on the Amalekites when the prophet told him to kill everything that had breath in it (1 Samuel 15:3), and a number of other cases (e.g., Exodus 14:9; Deuteronomy 11:4, 6;

28:15-18; Joshua 6:21; 7:24-25; Judges 6:4; 20:48; Psalm 135:8; Isaiah 35:9; Jeremiah 7:20; 21:6; Ezekiel 34:25; Jonah 4:11; Zephaniah 1:3; 14:15; Exodus 19:13; et al.).

One case was when the great city of Nineveh was threatened with divine wrath for its sins and the king proclaimed that both men and beasts must participate in signs of mourning in order to portray fully the city's complete penitence (Jonah 3:7-8). When the city repented and was spared, God said that he not only valued the many people in that city, but their cattle as well (Jonah 4:11). Evidently, God cared for them and did not want them needlessly killed; but for some unstated reason, the Bible says that at times God commanded that animals suffer along with their owners.

Appendix E

## Genesis 9:1-3 and Eating Meat

Although someone might speculate whether the Bible story allows that some people had been eating animals before the flood (with or without God's approval), in Genesis chapter nine God condones the eating of meat. It is apparently true that humans were not told that they could eat animals until after the flood (Genesis 1:30; 9:3). But it is speculation as to why this is so. Some aver that that since Eden was such an idyllic situation in so many ways then it must be God's ultimate standard of how things should be. Should people become nudists as well (Genesis 2:25)? How selective could Bible readers be when it comes to transposing the Edenic environment to today?

Of course, there do seem to be limits to what the Bible condones along this line. When driven to it, "A man will eat the flesh of his own arm" (Isaiah 9:20), but this is not encouraged. Even being a gluttonous eater of meat is discouraged (Proverbs 23:20).

Aside from the extremes, however, the Bible often pictures God as condoning the eating of meat. Consider when God fed the people with quail and manna in the wilderness after they left Egypt (Exodus 16:13), or when he said, "you can kill and eat flesh within all your gates after all the desire of your soul, according to the blessing of Jehovah God" (Deuteronomy 12:15, 20-21). The New Testament also records divine approval for eating animals (Acts 10:9-16), seeing that Jesus did it on occasion (Luke 24:42-43).

Appendix F

## Genesis 16:12 and Animal Metaphors

**Examples of the biblical use of animal metaphors:**

Jackals and ostriches were often used to symbolize wilderness places. Isaiah 13:20-22; Job 30:29

A horn was a symbol of power. 2 Chronicles 18:10

Going astray is a very common use of the sheep metaphor. 1 Chronicles 21:17; Psalm 119:176

Wings offer shelter, safety, and escape. Psalm 11:1 17:8; 18:10

Eagles are swift, powerful, and are associated with flight in general. Exodus 19:4; Job 9:26; Deuteronomy 28:49; Proverbs 23:5

Lions are fierce and strong. 2 Samuel 1:23; Numbers 23:24; Psalm 91:13

Lambs are innocent. Isaiah 11:6; 2 Samuel 12:3

Worms are lowly and connected with death. Psalm 22:6; Job 21:26; 25:6

A dog was not deserving of respect. A dead dog was even worse. 1 Samuel 24:14; 26:20; 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Kings 8:13

Deer were considered to be delicate, lovely, fleet, and sure footed. 2 Samuel 2:18; Psalm 18:33

A bear robbed of its whelps was dangerous. 2 Samuel 17:8

A lion was powerful, bold, and dangerous. 2 Samuel 17:10; Psalm 17:12; 1 Peter 5:8

Honey is the standard of sweet things. Psalm 19:10

Scorpions are painful in the extreme. 1 Kings 12:11, 14

Although donkeys and doves were valuable, certain body parts (e.g., a donkey's head or dove's dung) were unique symbols of worthlessness. 2 Kings 6:25

Dogs returning to their own vomit, and a clean sow going back to the mire were picturesque for a good person going back to being bad. 2 Peter 2:22; Proverbs 26:11

Anyone can easily see that the Bible's animal metaphor nomenclature is extensive. But there are many more than can be cited here (e.g., Mark 9:48; Proverbs 26:17; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Isaiah 1:18; 8:19; Ezekiel 1:10; 23:20; Daniel 7:1-8, 8:1ff.; Matthew 13:47-48; Revelation 6: 1ff.; 8:13; 9:1ff; 13:11; 16:13; 19:14). It is noteworthy that animals seem to be particularly important in the imagery of apocalyptic literature.

Appendix G

## Genesis 24:18-46 and Caring For Animals

The Bible repeatedly pictures God as one who cares about animals and fills their needs (Deuteronomy 11:15; Psalm 104:14). Psalm 104 lists several ways in which God cares for the animal world (see also Job 38:39-41; Psalm 36:6; 84:3; 136:25; 145:15-16; 147: 9). He feeds them, waters them, gives them shelter, and even provides night's darkness for many of them to leave their shelters and play their role in the world's ecosystems. God created nature with them in mind. He created the earth with built-in provisions for the creatures. Perhaps this relates to how they are pictured as praising God (Psalm 148:7, 10; 69:34; 96:11-12; 98:7; 103:22; 150:6). If God takes such good care of animals, should humans follow suit?

Some surmise that people in the Bible took care of their animals only because animals were property and were cared for solely in view of their owner's good. But this is speculation. Granted, in Genesis 24 the owner is given water first, then the animals. This fits with several texts that clearly say humans are of greater value than animals (Matthew 6:26; 10:31; 12:12). But it is not so clear whether animals are of merely instrumental value as it relates to their owners. Some animals were un-owned and lived in the wild. Any one of them might be "claimed" by a human being if encountered as could happen during a hunt for food. Thus, even though they did not belong to an individual, they fit the bigger picture of comprising and facilitating eco-systems, contingent availability for human beings if/when needed, etc.

When set in contrast, humans are more important; but this does not leave animals without their own place, importance, or role. Watering and feeding animals is average, every day behavior (Numbers 20:19). Since there were certain times of day when watering animals was customary (29:7), the watering hole could be a good place

to meet people. This is where the servant came to begin looking for a wife for Isaac. Later, this method worked again. (29:1 ff.)

Proverbs 10:12 is an important text to note when talking about biblical attitudes about human duty to animals. It says that a righteous man regards the life of his animal. One of the major themes in the book of Proverbs is the contrast between the fool and the wise man, or the wicked and the righteous. The biblical use of the word "righteous" ordinarily means "rightness." Thus, the righteous man is the one who acts rightly. That is to say, treating an animal well is the right thing to do.

The word "regard" is the translation of the Hebrew edy, the fundamental meaning of which is "notice, observe."[1] It is the word commonly translated "to know."[2] The same word is used in 29:7, "The righteous *considereth* the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know *it*." (KJV) Right acting and thinking persons take note of the poor. They do not act as though they are nonexistent or have no needs or feelings. The sense of this use of *yada* is in observing, taking note of, paying attention to the animal.

Commentators Keil and Delitzsch translate Proverbs 12:10 as, "The righteous knows how his cattle feel."[3] He does not care for them for the same reason he oils a machine to keep it working properly. He does it because he thinks of their welfare for its own sake. It is the right thing to do. The *Pulpit Commentary* says,

> he knows what animals want, what they can bear, and treats them accordingly . . . the care for the lower animals, and their kind treatment, are not the produce of modern sentiment and civilization.[4]

---

[1]Holladay 129-130.

[2]Brown, Driver, Briggs 393.

[3]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament repr. ed., vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975):255.

[4]H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds. The Pulpit Commentary vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950):235.

Modernity did not invent the idea of humane treatment of animals. The thought of 12:10 coincides with 27:23, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds." The author might as well be saying that these creatures are good to human beings and serve well, so take good care of them.

The book of Proverbs is a book of poetry, and the major characteristic of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. Parallelism relates two statements by contrasting them, building one upon the other, or restating the other in different words. The parallelism in 12:10 directs attention to the specific contrasts between a righteous *regard for life* and a wicked and *cruel compassion.*

"Compassion" or "tender mercies" are translated from the Hebrew word mymxr which is an absolute plural of intensity.[5] The term is usually employed in reference to God, and is often used for "loving feeling."[6] *Pulpit Commentary* says,

> The wicked cannot be supposed to have 'tender mercies;' hence it is best to take the word in the sense of 'feelings, ' 'affections.' What should be mercy and love are in the evil man only hard-heartedness and cruelty.[7]

The author does not specify what "cruel" means. Drawing the line on where kindness stops and cruelty starts has always been a major issue in this discussion.

---

[5]Brown, Driver, and Briggs 933.
[6]Holladay 337.
[7]Spence and Exell 235.

# VITA

Kippy Myers has been married to the former Deborah Claunch for 25 years. They have two daughters, Randa and Megan. Kippy has been preached for churches of Christ either full-time or by appointment since 1977. He is a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching (two year diploma), Freed-Hardeman College (B.A.), Harding Graduate School of Religion (M.A.), University of Dallas (M.A.), and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (Ph.D.).

In addition to spending several years in full-time preaching work in Hooks, Texas and Colleyville, Texas, Kippy has taught part-time for the Brown Trail School of Preaching, taught two courses as a Graduate Assistant for the University of Tennessee at Knoxville while doing his course work, and taught part-time for the University of North Alabama at Florence. He also taught full-time for eight years at International Bible College in Florence, Alabama, before coming to Freed-Hardeman University in August of 1998 where he now resides and serves as Chairman of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies. He has written many articles in religious journals and is Associate Editor of the religious paper, The World Evangelist where he works with Editor, Basil Overton.